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J. DEAN CRAIN  
*A BIOGRAPHY*

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J. DEAN CRAIN, D.D.

from a painting by B. O. Williams



# J. DEAN CRAIN

## *A BIOGRAPHY*

BY

LILLIE B. WESTMORELAND

*Assisted by Alfred S. Reid*

*Foreword by A. E. Tibbs*

HIOTT PRESS

*Greenville, S. C.*

*1959*

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Designed and Printed by HIOTT PRESS, Greenville, S. C.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



TO ELLEN WILSON CRAIN

In recognition of her influence  
in the life of her husband

*“. . . that you shall not only learn to  
know him who is called of God, but that  
you shall know better God who called  
him and that through his ministry we  
may grow more like the master.”*

J. ALEX HERRING



## *Foreword*

Dr. J. Dean Crain, my beloved pastor for several years at Pendleton Street Baptist Church, Greenville, South Carolina, was one of the most satisfying preachers I ever heard, Sunday in and Sunday out. His life was a symbol of the best that the great Blue Ridge has produced. As President of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, Vice President of the Southern Baptist Convention, member of several State and Southwide boards, trustee of Furman University, and civic leader, he exerted a wide influence.

Dr. Crain's great natural wit, his sane commonsense, and his great love for people — particularly the distressed — will long be remembered. He was not merely an upper countryman but a genius, and he was not simply a great preacher but an institution.

Now with the publication of Dr. Crain's life by a member of his church, Mrs. Lillie B. Westmoreland, a new event has occurred — an event that many Southwide friends have been looking forward to. Once the reader has peeped into its pages, he will not put this book down until he has devoured its contents.

A. E. TIBBS  
*Dean of Furman University*





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Dr. Crain with the Sullivan Award, 1952.

J. Dean Crain in the pulpit.

James F. Byrnes, J. Dean Crain and  
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J. Dean Crain breaking ground for the new campus of  
Furman University.



## *Prologue*

In the presidential election of 1952, the independent voters of South Carolina held a political rally in Columbia in honor of their candidate, Dwight D. Eisenhower. At the invitation of Governor James F. Byrnes, a silver-haired minister, once massively tall but now slightly stooped with age, rose to deliver the Invocation. Standing on the steps of the State Capitol, the Reverend J. Dean Crain of Greenville prayed that God would “lead the people of this country to elect God’s man to be the servant of all the people in all directions.” The fervor of Dean Crain’s prayer received national attention. A reporter for *The Evening Star* of Washington, D. C., commented on the prayer in his coverage of the rally. And when Dean Crain died three years later, President Eisenhower sent a letter of sympathy to Mrs. Crain memorializing her husband’s “earnestness and simplicity,” which had so moved the presidential candidate at the time that he had “inquired” about this minister and had “learned of the high esteem in which he was held throughout the State.”

Achieving national recognition was rare for J. Dean Crain, but, as President Eisenhower had found, his religious service within the borders of his native state had brought him statewide renown and, in the words of Governor Byrnes, had made him an “outstanding leader of the largest religious denomination in South Carolina.”

Dean Crain's primary service was among South Carolina Baptists, but because of his dynamic qualities of character and his unflagging zeal as a standard bearer in the Army of God's Kingdom on Earth, he came to be known far and wide among Southern Baptists as well as among South Carolina citizens of different denominational allegiance.

A memorial volume must of necessity be incomplete; it cannot hope to equal or replace the memory of deeds inscribed on the hearts of friends and co-workers; but such a volume can consecrate and help to preserve for other generations the deeds and character of the man described. The author intends this book as a memorial to a man of God, a minister of the Gospel, and hopes that the life it describes may serve as an inspiration to young men and women who have not yet found their purpose nor begun their quest for service.

J. DEAN CRAIN  
*A BIOGRAPHY*



## CHAPTER ONE

### *Early Life in the Dark Corner*

John Dean Crain was born October 25, 1881, in a log cabin in the northwest corner of South Carolina. He was the fifth of seven children born to David Hoke Crain and Jane Suddeth Crain, descendants of hardy British pioneer stock who had settled in the Piedmont several generations earlier. In the early part of the nineteenth century, according to tradition, Crain's paternal ancestors had packed their scanty store of household goods, crude implements, domestic animals, seeds, and jugs of cider, and had followed the trail of other English immigrants out of the South Carolina low country and into the hills in search of land and fewer living restrictions. Dean Crain's maternal ancestors, the Suddeths, of Scotch-Irish origin, were apparently among the immigrants from Pennsylvania and Virginia who had already settled the area ahead of the English. But land was plentiful. In the shadow of Glassy Rock Mountain the English settlers had built their cabins of rough logs, cleared and cultivated their fields, spun their clothes, distilled their whiskey, and had settled down to a primitive routine of livelihood, undisturbed by the patterns of civilization left behind on the Carolina coast and in the older settlements of Virginia and Pennsylvania.

The Crains and Suddeths must have brought with them



the rudiments of learning within a simple Christian culture, for Dean Crain's mother could read the Bible aloud to her husband, who could not read; and the Crain family to this day cherishes the tradition that one of Dean's ancestors, a grandfather, had been a farmer-minister who preached simplified Baptist doctrines. Except for this one ancestor, J. Dean Crain was apparently born into an undistinguished family, but the memory of this mountain minister would become important to young Crain as he grew up.

And he grew up fast. He had to. The "dark corner" — a derogatory label for this region in upper South Carolina — was no place to indulge a child. Although Crain's parents, as he remembered them, were gentle and understanding, the rigorous farm life needed all the hands available. Children took over small jobs quite early and advanced to more difficult and responsible tasks as they grew older. Shade and Emma, Crain's older brother and sister, went to more mature duties as first Dean, then Buford, and finally Elizabeth was born. Two other children died at tender ages.

As soon as young Crain was old enough, he was helping his brothers and sisters gather logs and pine knots for the open fireplace where his mother did all her cooking in cast-iron kettles resting on the open coals or on "spiders," better known perhaps as three-legged skillets with long handles and fitted covers. Often he must have joined the children in helping their mother make the dough for corn pone, biscuit, ginger cake, and sweet potato pies, or in helping her roast or parch green coffee beans, which she then ground in the coffee mill that hung on the wall. No doubt he and his brothers helped clean and cut the chickens which their mother fried in the skillets. In the spring he and his younger brother Buford went with their mother and sisters and their neighbors to gather the cresses which grew near the springs, and the "poke sallet" which grew wild in the fields; both of these wild greens made delicious vegetable platters.

As he grew older, young Crain helped hoe the weeds in the family garden and saw that the beans, okra, turnips, tomatoes, Irish potatoes, and other vegetables had ample care. Late in the summer he helped the family plant black-eyed peas in the corn middles, and in the fall he and his brothers and sisters helped pick and thresh the peas. To the young Crain children, pea threshing was like a game. They loaded an armfull of peas onto a sheet which they beat thoroughly with sticks; and then lifting up the sheet by the corners, they waved it lightly in the air for the wind to carry off the chaff. Next they cleaned the peas and helped store them in crockery jars covered with thick clean cloths to keep out bugs and rats. In the winter young Crain and his brothers scampered off under orders to gather pumpkins and help bury them in the hay fodder in the barn to keep them fresh. There was no end to the household chores. All year-round young Crain kept busy helping father and mother Crain prepare and store food. If not picking fruit and laying it out to dry, he was helping shred raw cabbage into crockery jars and watching his mother add salt and vinegar to cure it; or he was helping soak "big hominy" in lye solution to remove the husks; or he was helping salt down the hog meat and watching his father or mother grind the sausage and helping to store it in corn shucks and hang it in the smoke house. To a small boy eager to play, this life must often have seemed wearisome.

As he grew still larger, Dean's tasks grew larger and required more independence and responsibility, but were no less tedious. By the age of nine, his daily routine began early. About four o'clock in the morning his father waked him and his brothers, who dressed quickly and set about their tasks. Shade, the oldest brother, fed the stock; Buford milked the cows; and Dean built the fires and drew the water. Since the cooking was done in the fire-place, young Crain had to build fires summer and winter.

These chores done and breakfast over, Crain went to the



corn fields, wheat fields, or cotton "patch" and performed tasks of plowing, planting, or harvesting as the season dictated. The severity of the life demanded a sense of humor. The first plowing that Crain did was with a steer, a crafty, stubborn, lazy creature who knew the note of authority in "Pappy" Crain's voice but would not always respond to the inexperienced proddings of Dean and Buford. Since father Crain would not allow the boys to beat the steer, they sometimes had to use all their youthful ingenuity to keep the "cantankerous" animal at work. One day while breaking ground in last year's cornfield, the steer quit pulling and lay down. Buford, who was driving the steer, twisted his tail and made the beast rise. But immediately he lay down again, and Buford ran around and twisted his tail again. The steer got up a second time, but again lay down and would not budge at the third twist of his tail. The boys were powerless. Struck suddenly by a bright idea, they gathered cornstalks, which they piled around the beast and set on fire. The heat caused the old steer to squirm; as the flames began to singe his hide, he sluggishly got up and moved just far enough away from the fire to lie down in safety. At last the boys gave up and called their father, at whose arrival the steer jolted himself to life and resumed his task.

In harvesting season Dean and Buford hitched the old steer or their father's mule to a home-made two-runner sled and hauled the crops from the fields to the small storage barns. They also used the sled to haul firewood to the house and leaves to their several stables. It was more work having to supply many stables, but Crain's father had a keen business sense and thought it was good fire insurance to build "one corn crib here, one there; one horse stable here, one there; one cow stable here, one there" so as to store "part of the fodder, shucks, and hay in one place, some in another. In case of fire the loss of animals or feedstuffs would not be so large." These stables, barns, and cow lots were enclosed



by a split-rail fence, which young Crain and his brothers helped build. "We were not Abraham Lincolns at all," Crain's brother Buford has said, "but we did split rails, for we didn't have wire fences in those days. Dean and I split ten-foot timbers for rails with a metal wedge, which we bought, and with a large maul, which we made of dogwood. We also split boards of shorter length for the roof sheeting of the house our father built after we were good-sized boys."

Once darkness set in, the hard day was over. The Crains had small brass oil lamps, often without chimneys, which augmented the glow from the burning pine knots in the fireplace to furnish light after dusk. But little light was necessary. Except for Mrs. Crain's oral Bible-reading, everyone was too tired to do much but sit on the porch or steps in summer and relax before a dying fire in winter before going to bed. As Dean Crain put it in later years, "We did not need much light because we went to bed with the chickens and got up with the crowing of the same."

Yet life at the Glassy Mountain cabin was not all work. As has been said, the children often made play out of work. Threshing the peas was fun, and down near the branch where young Crain's mother washed and hung the clothes to dry over low bushes and sagging tree limbs, "we children," Buford remembers, "would crawl up under the sheets and 'play-like' it was our house or wig-wam." There, too, in the dam and elsewhere the boys often went swimming on hot summer days. Occasionally the neighboring families got together for "pop-corn poppings," "potato roastings," and "corn shuckings," and on these and other social gatherings, the children romped and played with reckless abandon. The favorite gathering, which was also a neighborly work-sharing occasion, was the "corn-shucking." After the crops were gathered in the fall and before the weather got too cold, the men and young folks gathered around a large pile of corn in the early evening and worked while the women prepared supper or refreshments.

"Moonshining" also provided the mountaineers with various kinds of "play" and emotional release, often of an irresponsible sort. Since most families had their own stills and sometimes more than one, stills abundantly dotted the rugged mountain sides and valleys. Dean once wrote that he had seen "as many as twenty distilleries in two miles of each other"; on every branch "there were one to three blockade distilleries." Dean Crain writes in his autobiography that while still young, even though his own family kept no still, he had gained wide renown for his ability to break up more mash with his feet, usually at neighbors' and relatives' stills, than most people could with a mash stick.

Moonshining was as much a way of life to the mountain people as soft drink bottling companies and vending machines are to mid-century Americans. Moonshining was a challenge as well as an exciting release from the monotonous rigors of farm labor. More important, it was one of the few means of getting money. In later life Dean Crain was able to remember and justify with feeling, even if he then no longer approved of, the mountaineer's lucrative avocation: if the government had a right to operate distilleries, then the mountaineer had the same right, so he argued. "The moonshiner goes back among the hills . . . and listens to the sweet music which the little brooks make as they wind their way down the face of the rugged hills and thinks how the clear water in this dark spot would cool the vapor from the beer, and how he could make three gallons of corn whiskey from a bushel of corn and sell it for one or two dollars per gallon when he could only get sixty cents for his corn." Nearby villages and cities, chiefly Hendersonville, Greenville, Campobello, and particularly Woodruff served as markets to which the mountaineers hauled their whiskey.

Moonshining added an excitement to the mountain life of Crain's youth partly because it was in violation of federal law. The moonshiners had to be alert. At any time they might



be visited on their own land or might be stopped en route to market by the dreaded "Revenuers." Shooting often broke out, and mountaineers were often killed. Once two neighbors of the Crains, Bill Durham and Jack Fisher, were driving their wagon team to Woodruff with a load of whiskey when the revenuers stopped them. Shooting began on both sides. Toler, a revenue officer, was shot near the heart but was not killed; he returned fire, and a mule fell over; he shot again and hit Bill Durham. Toler and Durham crawled off the road to a cotton patch and lay beside each other and talked until Durham died. Toler survived and was later led to Christ by the Crain brothers, Dean and Buford.

One cold wintry day as Dean Crain and others were working hard at a still, word came that the officers had left Greenville and were headed for the Dark Corner. Dean was posted at the top of a hill to watch, but got so cold he went down to the still to get a "dram." Then it happened. "I was standing," Crain says, "between the fleck stand and the 'dubbler.' All of a sudden there came a shout from up the branch, 'Hold up your hands, boys.' I looked and began to get up the hill. We held up to the bushes as we ran, but that was all the holding up we did. There was an old man there who had gotten a little too much 'booze' under his shirt. His head seemed so heavy that his limbs could not carry it. He was making a desperate effort. . . . There was a tub of 'pot-tail' buried in the side of the hill. . . . The last I saw of him he had fallen into the tub of 'pot-tail' — it being just warm enough to be uncomfortable. As he went in, it flew in every direction, but I did not wait to see further results. I was rather in a hurry just at that time."

The liquor traffic also resulted in frequent outbursts of violence among the mountaineers themselves. One night a mysterious fire destroyed the log cabin of a man named Hensley. Legend attributed the deed to a drunken crowd which killed the family and set fire to the cabin.

On another occasion, one day before dawn, a man galloped his horse furiously into the Crain family's yard and shouted, "Come outta there, Shade Crain, damn you. I'm a-gonna kill you." Shade jumped into his pants, ran down the narrow stairs, bolted out the door, shooting wildly as he ran. The rider and his horse were so startled by this quick and unexpected action that they "turned-tail" and got out of sight as fast as they had galloped up.

But family feuds among the mountaineers of Crain's youth needed no stimulation from liquor. Feeling ran high in its own right. The slightest hint of insult might fan into violent action the fierce pride that smouldered among the families. Children were indoctrinated with a rigid code of family loyalty and were taught to fight if ever the honor of family and friends was threatened. They did not always fight with fists; they went in to whip or shoot. "I went with a friend one night," Dean said, "to shoot some boys who had gotten me out one night and 'run' me as far as they could see me. I 'run' too. They had a little old brown-looking pup along. They set him on my tracks, but I soon left him. I did not go around bushes; I ran over them. That dog did not know how to run. He got ashamed and went back with his tail between his legs. I got a chance to pay those boys back, but as it turned out, they did not come that road. . . . There was scarcely a boy in the neighborhood above twelve years old who did not carry a pistol."

The feuding families were their own law. They took matters into their hands and meted out justice according to mountaineer needs and ideas of justice. "Sometimes when some of the mean men in the country were killed, the people were glad, and the man who did the killing would 'come clear' on a plea of self-defense. In my early life," Crain's brother Buford has reported, "several people buried here in Glassy Mountain, Highland, Oak Grove, Gowansville, Ebenezer-Welcome, and Mountain Hill Cemeteries died with their shoes



on." The only evidence of organized law was the raids of the "Revenuers," whom the moonshiners hated bitterly, and the sheriff's force, who came prowling whenever there was a murder.

Almost a legend in the Dark Corner is the defiance of the law by Little Bill Howard who was charged with shooting through a window and killing a sick man named Ben Ross while the latter was lying helpless on the floor before the fireplace. Little Bill was arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to be hanged. On the day before his scheduled execution, his wife drove to Greenville in the wagon and brought her tiny infant with her. Since the other prisoner in Bill's cell had been moved out, there was an extra cot; and the jailer, Mr. Cooksey, had compassion on the mother and baby and granted them permission to spend the night with the condemned father. Before the cell was locked, Howard told Cooksey that his wife was traveling by wagon, that she had a long trip to make the next morning, and requested that he call them about four o'clock. Next morning at the appointed hour, in the poor light of pre-dawn, the jailer came with his key and unlocked the door. Tearfully taking her leave, caressing the baby, and talking and sobbing hysterically, the "mother" went on her way with the sympathy and kindest wishes of the jailer who watched her depart in a long flowing dress and apron of the time and with her face hidden under the old-time bonnet.

Some two or three hours later when Cooksey came again to the prisoner's cell, he found Mrs. Howard and realized that her husband had escaped in woman's clothes. She insisted that she be released, that her baby would be at a relative's house in one of the mill villages, and that she would have to go and nurse it. The jailer did not know what to do. No one else did either. The affair was eventually handed up to the governor who said that Mrs. Howard was not the prisoner and could not be held. Howard fled to the mountains and hid out.

He was later tried for another murder which he did not commit and was somehow cleared of all charges. The story typifies the rugged lawlessness of the Dark Corner in Crain's youth.

While hard work, hard liquor, and violent "play" made up the more conspicuous part of the environment during the first dozen years or so of Dean Crain's life, other prominent features must not go unnoticed. Not the least of these is the isolation. Glassy Rock Mountain is on a spur that juts down into the northeastern part of Greenville County and thrusts itself between the natural gaps permitting access to the Blue Ridge Mountains beyond. The chief mountains in this spur are Glassy Rock, Round Top, Hogback, and Callaham. Early roads cutting through Greenville County by-passed this area and afforded the people little communication with outside life for generations. During Crain's boyhood, the area was still shut in on the north by mountain fastnesses; the nearest through roads on the south, east, and west were five miles from his father's home. So few and meager were these roads as late as the early twentieth century that they could serve only wagon travel. They were almost impassable during most of the year because of bad weather. It is no wonder that in later life Crain stressed the importance of educating the mountaineers. Cut off as they were from the rest of the world, they knew nothing about current events, about the latest scientific discoveries, or about the latest inventions for the improvement of mankind.

Not only were Crain's people isolated and ignorant; they were poor. They did not actually go wanting, but judged by modern standards, even by contemporary standards in Greenville and Charleston, their possessions were crude and simple. The home in which Dean Crain was born was made of logs. The chimney was made of rocks cemented together, and the hearth was made of large flat rocks. The ceiling was unfinished; the floor was of rough-hewn pine or poplar; the roofing



was either poplar or red oak shingles. Furnishings were simple and handmade and consisted of a table, a few chairs, benches or stools, beds, and a chest or two. The small brass oil lamps and the kettles and spiders have already been mentioned. While still a boy, Dean helped his brothers and father build a new clapboard house with three rooms downstairs and a finished attic. The chimney of the old cabin in which he was born and the new house which he helped build may still be seen on the mountain site where he grew up.

Clothing was equally primitive. Mrs. Crain and her daughters spun the thread from cotton or wool, wove their own cloth, dyed it, and fashioned it into clothes. The women dyed the material in a boiling mixture of red-oak bark or copperas in a wash-pot of water; the red-oak bark gave a reddish brown color, and the copperas gave a sort of khaki color. In later life Dean and Buford remarked that they were ten or twelve years old before they ever had any "bought clothes."

Medical services were as primitive and limited as material possessions. Two or three country doctors served the upper part of the county, but their practice was small because they were usually farmers or teachers who practiced only in their spare time. The people went to these doctors or sent for them to set broken bones, to repair bodies that had been shot or mangled in fights or accidents, or to give treatment in cases of extreme illness; but for the most part the mountaineers had "fine physiques" and withstood sickness. Mid-wives assisted at most births, and one hardly ever heard of a difficult delivery at which a doctor had to be called in.

Although isolated and poor and deprived of civilized professional services, the Crains and their mountain neighbors were served off and on by itinerant preachers, for the most part Baptists, who held "protracted meetings" in the primitive churches or under brush arbors during the summer months. The preachers walked or rode a mule, and preached for

virtually nothing. During Crain's youth, A. D. Bowers preached throughout the area and before his death had served for forty years in this fashion without ever receiving a salary. Since the churches were unheated, no meetings were held during cold weather. Sunday School assembled on Sunday afternoons during the summer, and "preaching was held" once a month. Young Dean Crain and his brother Buford sat through about four sermons a year listening to A. D. Bowers expound the Christian views of sin, repentance, and salvation. Baptismal services were conducted in a pond or creek or in a deep hole in a river. Dean Crain's mother was converted after her marriage and rode five miles behind her husband on a mule to be baptized in the creek down in a hollow near Glassy Mountain Baptist Church.

A funeral usually demanded the services of a minister, but if one was not available, a layman performed a rude ritual. When someone died, friends and neighbors took over. They sent for a minister, but meanwhile they made the coffin and the box which served as a vault, and they dug the grave. They covered the outside of the coffin with black cloth and lined it with white cloth. They made a small pillow of cotton and covered it with white cloth. The women prepared the body of a woman or child for burial, and the men prepared the body of a man for burial. The men gathered and "sat up with the corpse" during the night. Frequently they were able to get F. L. Turner, Fayette Davis, Oliver Barton, or A. D. Bowers to conduct the funeral. If one of these preachers could not come, an elderly deacon "who prayed in public" would hold a simple service, or a passerby might be conscripted. On one occasion Buford Crain, then an unsaved boy of about fourteen who was "doing better," happened to be passing a group assembled for a burial. He had been plowing in a distant field, was dusty and dirty, and the sweat had streaked his brow and face. But a member of the bereaved family had hailed him and insisted that he come into the



house and "make the remarks." "Well, I did the best I could," Buford Crain the minister remembered, "and that was my first funeral."

It is not difficult to understand why Christianity seemed to make so little difference to the mountaineers, so little was it explained and understood. The tacit "philosophy" under which Dean grew up was more superstitious and "magical" than it was Christian, enlightened, or rational; it is what one would expect from ignorant, isolated people unaccustomed to the subtleties of distinguishing between cause and effect. The mountaineers believed that bad luck would follow a rabbit's running across a road in front of a person, and that death would certainly strike the family if one member caught a glimpse through the trees of a rising new moon. They believed that a horse shoe tossed into the fire would keep away hawks and that a horse shoe nailed to the door would bring good luck.

Dean reports that his people held in awe the night owl and the "news-flies." He writes that the mountaineers would run for their guns when the night owl "comes blowing his horn about the house"; but he gives no reason for this fear. He reports also that the people "have a notion that the black news-fly brings bad luck, but that the yellow one brings good luck." And he tells a humorous anecdote debunking this superstition. "One morning about nine o'clock one of the noted moonshiners went to see how his still was working. It was doing fine, throwing up a little mash; he said, 'It will be ready tomorrow.' Then there came a large yellow fly around and stopped and delivered his message of good luck. The man pulled off his hat and hollered out, 'Good luck, boys, good luck, going to make three gallons to the bushel this time shore as you are born.' Next morning when all was ready the officers came in and captured the outfit and destroyed it. In a while this man came over to view his ruins, and another yellow newsfly came around. He picked up a piece of plank and

'run' him out of the neighborhood. He said a black newsfly could not have possibly told a blacker lie. He was always afraid, after this, to trust the newsfly."

During his early years, environment assisted heredity in forming in Dean Crain those traits of character that would later make him a leader among South Carolina Baptists. His life of impoverishment and isolation taught him to be strong and vigorous and industrious, for survival depended on these traits. It taught him to be independent in judgment and trained him in endurance so that he later could thrive on the rigors of full-time Christian service. It taught him how to face crises with a stolidity founded on a sense of humor. It taught him aggressiveness and zeal so that in time he would grow into a fiery preacher relentlessly outspoken against alcoholism and other morally deleterious passions of life that he had known in the first decades of his life. But new influences prior to and during his adolescence were already at work, and to them and their effect on young Crain we now turn.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Stirrings of Mind and Soul*

In later life Dean Crain remembered that his earliest years were spent not totally oblivious to the grander mysteries of the universe. One of the first things "that ever stirred my mind," he wrote in his autobiography, "was the echoing of my voice by the hills. I was out in the fields and spoke to my sister, who was some distance away, and heard my voice across the hollow. This worried me no little." He and his brothers and sisters often shouted across the fields to the hills to hear the echoes of their voices, which reverberated more loudly and distinctly early in the morning and late in the day. The exactness with which the echoes mimicked their calls was no less amazing to them than were the seeming animation and "low breathings" of the mountains to the English poet William Wordsworth when he was about the same age. The mystery of this natural phenomena did not make Dean Crain a mystic, as it did Wordsworth, but it struck him and his brother Buford with awe. A deeper, more immense world than that of their daily routine had thus opened up before them and was to haunt them for years thereafter.

The awe inspired by the mountain echoes was matched by the wonder of the natural beauty which early impressed itself on young Crain. At work or at play he was surrounded by the cool beauty of the Piedmont — its streams and trees, its



mountains and hazy Blue Ridge skyline in the distance. The realization grew and blossomed forth in later years that this region was not the "Dark Corner" because of the natural environment but because of the spiritual impoverishment of the people and their "ungovernable passions born of ignorance." He wrote, "This section is not dark by nature . . . ; nowhere are the hills bluer, nor the sky clearer. Nowhere do the little creeks sparkle more joyously; nowhere are the rugged hills more picturesque." During his teens the beauty of nature contrasted so forcefully with the drab and meaningless life of the mountaineers that Dean Crain sensed his life was out of harmony with nature and the intelligence which had created it.

He wrote of one experience in particular. One Sunday afternoon in May he went with four cousins "across Seed Tick Mountain to get some liquor. . . . There had been a shower of rain. The sun was sending . . . beautiful rays out across the hills as it went down into the yellow west. The little brown Thrushes were hopping about the beer stands, getting a crumb here and there. The Yellow Breast was flying joyfully from tree to tree. The Mockingbird was singing in the tall poplars. The drops of water were hanging from the green leaves. They looked like tears of joy. All nature was in harmony with itself. Somehow or other I had a feeling this afternoon of being out of place. I never saw such an hour. I thought of the Power that created the hills and made them beautiful. There we were, the old silver-haired man, his sons lying on the ground with a deck of cards and a pint flask, the contents of which were rapidly disappearing. As soon as the 'dubblin' was off, all went to playing cards, but somehow or other I could take no part. Before long one of those boys died of exposure, another was killed, another died in the penitentiary, another was sentenced to hang."

Precisely when the mystery and beauty of nature began their subtle work on the impressionable farm boy is not known.

But we can set more accurately the date for the beginning of another new and enlightening experience that was to have far-reaching effect on his life. Dean Crain received his first formal schooling in 1891 when he was ten years old. At that time some of the people in the community became concerned about the ignorance and illiteracy in the Dark Corner. They had come to realize that the advantages existing in communities outside the mountains were partly due to education. Very few of the mountain people could read and write, and even those few had scarcely anything to read. Some of these people now asked, "Why can't we have a school?" The idea spread, discussions followed, and eventually the community was challenged. Once the people were aroused, they were willing to sacrifice their own time and strength to provide the opportunities for schooling their young. Heroically they worked, and before long they had completed a small, one-room school building near the old Tyger Post Office and across the road from Ebenezer-Welcome Church — located at that time slightly west of its present site.

Thereafter for a few weeks each summer Dean and his brothers and sisters attended school. Furnishings were meager. Hand-made board shutters served as windows. A long, narrow bench hugging the base of the wall all around the room served the children for "desks." At one end of the room a durable coat of ebony black paint applied in the shape of a blackboard on the wall served as a "blackboard." Each child had a small slate and a pencil, and with these tools Dean Crain and the other children learned to form their letters, to spell, to "figure," and to compose sentences. Few were the books, and almost non-existent were up-to-date periodicals of current events. "I never saw a newspaper until I was 13 years old," wrote Dean Crain later.

Educational theory and curriculum were simple. The teacher conducted classes by calling for recitations and by constantly drilling the students in the rudiments of reading,



writing, and arithmetic. There were no frills, no humanitarian impulses to salvage the egos. Severity ruled. If the children missed their "recitations," they had to stay in and study. For misbehavior or continued carelessness in preparing lessons, students had to sit on the "dunce bench" at the front of the room. Sometimes the teacher had to whip a high-spirited child. But even the bigger boys would not "sass" the teacher. Despite the civic lawlessness and the independent feeling of the people, the person and authority of the school teacher were respected.

Since the material equipment of the school was meager, since the school was independent of any stated philosophy other than mastering essentials, and since the children went to school for only a few months each year, the personality of the teacher determined the tone and quality of the learning that Dean received. W. H. Cannada, for instance, who later became a Southern Baptist missionary in Brazil, strongly emphasized religion during the two or three summers that he taught at the Ebenezer-Welcome School. He read the Bible and prayed with the children every morning. He taught hymns and each day set aside time for singing them: "In the Sweet By and By," "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," "Jesus Lover of My Soul," "O Happy Day," and "The Half Has Never Yet Been Told." On Fridays he had the children bring their Sunday School literature, and he would teach them their Sunday School lesson for the coming Sunday. Cannada's religious enthusiasm and his combining religion and daily skills made a great impression on Dean and his younger brother. A medical student named J. A. Lindsay maintained a more secular atmosphere during the one summer that he filled in as teacher. But apparently Dean had no regular teacher. Anyone available who could read and write seems to have been conscripted to do the job of overcoming the ignorance of these mountaineer pupils.

The children walked to school in all kinds of weather.

At first the Crain children walked about three quarters of a mile to the east, down the road toward Gowansville and Campobello. Later when the people at Ebenezer-Welcome could not afford to pay a teacher and the school closed, the Crain children walked three miles to Highland School. School hours at each school were long. Beginning at eight o'clock in the morning, class sessions continued until four o'clock in the afternoon and were interrupted only three times for recesses. The noon recess was quite long and gave the children time to play games which developed muscular skills, cunning, and fair play. Most of the games required no equipment. About the only one which called for playthings was a form of baseball called "town-ball." A bat and a ball, usually "ho'made," were prized possessions of lucky boys. The ball was made of wool threads unravelled from a worn-out sock or stocking. It bounced very high when dry and was very heavy when wet. When the batter connected soundly and slammed out a hard hit on a wet ball, the catcher and batter received a good splattering. As many could play as wanted to, for the manner of making the "outs" was to catch a fly ball or cross out the runner by rolling the ball in front of him as he ran the bases.

The game of "fox" was a favorite with the Crain boys. One boy was chosen to be the fox, and the rest were the hounds. The fox would be given a "head start" and then the chase was on. Sometimes the boys playing this game went down the road, across the fields, or through the woods—oblivious to time and place. Since it was a disgrace for the fox to get caught, he would often run a mile or more from the school, and the others would follow. On these occasions recess was over before the boys returned, and they were punished by being deprived of recess for a set period of time.

The roughest games were wrestling and "rap-jacket." To play the latter, two boys would cut off pine limbs and whip each other until one boy gave up. Sometimes this game



produced physical harm, and Buford remembers that fierce fights often developed.

School lunches consisted of whatever foods the families had at home. Some lunches were very meager, only "corn pone" and a bowl of dinner vegetables. Common items were baked sweet potatoes, boiled eggs, fried meat or molasses in a "fat" biscuit, and fried apple pies. It was a treat and a mark of distinction to have gingerbread and egg-custard.

The old school house where the Crain boys first went to school was sold in later years. The oldest Crain brother, Shade, bought the acre of land and moved the school building to the pasture behind his home, where it stands today as a storage barn. The original shutters are still intact, as is the hardware on the door — except for the padlock itself. The "painted-on" blackboard is still there and appears capable of further use.

Not until during his early teens did Dean Crain ever go beyond his mountain community. His first venture into the outer world was a momentous experience. When he was fourteen and his brother Buford was ten, their father took them on their first trip to Campobello, some ten miles away to the east. Their first glimpse of a train was awesome. Standing near the Campobello depot, they looked down the tracks toward Spartanburg and waited anxiously for the appearance of this mysterious object. Accustomed as they were to nature's surprises and experienced as they were in the tactics of self-preservation, the boys were, nevertheless, unprepared when the train came into view. At first they heard the long "to-who-oo-o" of the whistle. "She's coming," they heard someone say. They eased cautiously away from the tracks. Then came a louder blast of the whistle. And suddenly, belching black smoke and hissing off steam, a monstrous machine lurched around a curve and into view. The Crain boys jumped and ran back up the road some thirty yards before they realized that the train was going to stay on the tracks. Then

they stopped to stare. That was "right smart" of an education in itself, Buford remembered. Hearing the names of "Spartanburg," "Asheville," and "North Carolina" at the depot also stirred their young minds to wonderment.

Some two years later Dean and Buford had the heretofore unequalled privilege of riding on a train. Their father often had to make trips to Greenville, which was more than twenty miles away. Each trip required two days. Father Crain spent most of the first day getting to town and trading a little before putting up the team and wagon for the night at Pates and Allen Livery Stable. He slept in the wagon. He would conclude business early the next day and then return home.

On the first occasion for taking his young sons, the father gave the boys each ten or fifteen cents at Taylors and said that they could "catch the train" to Greenville if they wanted. He told them to meet him at the livery stable. The boys were anxious yet fearful. They went to the station for their tickets, then backed away fifty yards or so to wait. Remembering their first look at a train, they were both frightened. The train came. They hesitated. But they knew they must get on or walk to Greenville. At the last moment they ran for it and jumped on just in time. Dean led the way and found himself a seat by a window. Buford followed and sat down beside him. But finding that his view was obstructed, Buford got up and also took a seat by the window. There was a rattle, a jerk, a blowing of the whistle, and the train began to move. As it picked up speed, the trees, houses, and fields seemed to race by. Once when the train slowed a little, rattled, jostled, and blew its whistle, Buford thought something was wrong with it and wanted to jump off. But Dean said they were not in Greenville yet and reminded his younger brother that "Paw said for us not to get off 'til we get to Greenville." He added sceptically, "I guess it will stop there."

These keen mountain boys adjusted quickly, however, and



after a few minutes as "we saw people creeping along the road in a wagon, plodding along plowing a mule, hoeing cotton and all, we thought we were through with all that. We were simply out of this world — and the grass at home waiting on us." Buford laughed as he remembered this episode of their youth.

At about the age of eleven Dean was first stirred to a realization of the incongruities and horrors of moonshining as a way of life. One day while down in the woods at a liquor still, he watched a man stir the contents of a vat. The heat of the sun, the steaming of the boiling pot, and the exertions of the man as he reached over the hot vat to stir the brew caused him to sweat profusely. The sweat poured from under his hat brim, ran down his face, and dropped into the vat. He raised his head, looked directly into the eyes of the boy, and with a "peculiar" expression said, "Ain't that what the Bible says, Dean, that a man has to make his living by the sweat of his brow?" Dean recoiled. He knew just enough Bible to be aware that the moonshiner was mocking the Bible and teasing him. It seemed irreverent to be quoting the scripture at such a time and place. His sensibilities were vaguely stirred by the incongruity of moonshining and Christianity. Years later he remarked that the event never lost its sharpness. "I can see that man's face now as he said that to me."

Throughout his early teens, other experiences revealed the horrible consequences of the liquor traffic to Dean Crain and caused a growing uneasiness in his young mind. When he was about fifteen, Dean went with a neighbor to the house of a cousin-in-law named Hayes, a carpenter by trade, who on the side ran blockade whiskey. While there, he learned that Hayes urgently needed to get away from the community. In about two weeks after this visit, Hayes disappeared. When he did not return in several days, his wife went to see her Uncle Hoke Crain, Dean's father. Even though Hayes was



sometimes away for weeks at a time doing carpenter work, she said she had a feeling that her husband's absence was due to liquor — that he might even be dead. Hoke Crain tried to reassure her that there was nothing to worry about. But she insisted that she "just had a feeling" that her husband was dead. Dean and Buford overheard this conversation and the others that followed and were alarmed. For days her feeling persisted, and each day she continued to come to visit Uncle Hoke and tell him her fears. Soon Hoke Crain helped organize a searching party to hunt for Hayes.

Time passed, but Hayes could not be found. Finally one day a searching party discovered a body on a river bank. The rains had washed away some brush, and one of the party uncovered a foot in a freshly dug section of the bank. He scraped away the dirt and found a headless body which had been shot in the back. Someone else found the head in a nearby cane patch.

The news spread quickly through the hills and hollows, and the Crain boys learned about it and decided to go and see for themselves. Their father tried to discourage them, but they went anyway. When they reached the scene, curiosity and excitement overcame Dean, who went over, picked up the head, and turned it around to see if he could make out who it was. Just as he realized with horror that it was his cousin's missing husband, the partially decomposed brains spilled out into his hands.

After the people had buried Hayes' mutilated corpse, as their custom was, the aggrieved wife grew weaker and weaker with a strange sickness. One night not long after the burial while the Crain family was sitting on the back porch in the dark, out of the shadows appeared two forms. Hayes' little children, a boy of four and a girl of six, had come at their "Ma's" request to ask Buford and Dean to read the Bible and pray with her. Both boys were unsaved then and did not

know how to pray, but the father said, "Well, boys, it looks like you are going to have to go."

Greatly disturbed, they went with their little second cousins. In the house of the sick woman, now on her death bed, Buford heeded her request and sang "This World Is Not My Resting Place, Heaven Is My Home." She tried to sing with him, but could not. The song over, Dean opened her Bible and tried to read it to her. She then asked him to pray—"Not for me," she said, "for I'm a-going on, but pray for my children here." Again Dean tried something new and somehow stumbled through a prayer. It was the first time that Buford had ever heard his brother raise his voice in prayer. Mrs. Hayes died shortly thereafter.

On another occasion during these teen-age years, Dean and a companion named Brown went to see the corpse of "Goob" Henson, who had been found dead — killed by a blow on the skull — just off an old country road near Campbell's Mill. The boys arrived in time to see the scene of the crime unchanged. One wagon wheel had caught on a dogwood tree. The mule was still hitched to the wagon. The body lay in the edge of the woods several yards away. The boys were there when Dr. Mooney arrived from Gowansville to make an official examination, and they helped him stand the stiff body on its feet and watched him while he "split the scalp and peeled it down and scraped the skull behind the right ear with his long finger right in that dent made by the knucks." In 1954 Dean Crain said, "I can hear him now."

Both "Goob" Henson and Hayes had met with murder, it was learned, because of the liquor trade. The horror of these scenes made an impact on the mind of Dean Crain which, as he put it in mountaineer understatement, disturbed him "no little."

Still another incident involved Dean more personally. A bully named Staggs and three of his cronies once approached a cotton patch where Dean was working, and Staggs, who was



drunk, challenged Dean. He said with a sneer that he had heard about Dean, about how strong he was, and concluded: "I am going to beat you up."

"I have never done anything to you. You had better go on now and leave me alone," Dean said and backed off into the field, eyeing the men. He had a pistol in his pocket, but he did not want to use it. Staggs was so "likkered up" and kept threatening and advancing that Dean picked up a rock and hit him in the head. As Staggs fell, he reached for his gun, and Dean drew his and shouted: "If you touch that gun, I'll be obliged to kill you."

Staggs then became unconscious, and Dean looked up at the three companions, not knowing what to expect. But they were fleeing in all directions. Dean went to Shade's house and told what happened. Shade sent Dean home and took Staggs to a doctor.

Because fierce family pride might explode in vengeful retaliation, Hoke Crain took his boy up the mountain and across the river some distance away to his sister's house. Avoiding the frequently used paths and roads, father and son made their way through the gathering dusk and early darkness. At the river the father stopped and said: "Now, son, you go on. I'll wait here. When you are in the yard whistle and I will answer. Then call your cousin out and tell him what has happened. You stay here until I come for you. We'll wait and see what happens. If Staggs doesn't live, I'll bring the sheriff and come for you. If he does live we'll wait and see how things go. You stay here until I come for you." Dean obeyed. His cousin took him in when he had heard the story. "Dean," he said, "you sleep in that back room and don't show yourself. If anybody comes here I'll do the talking. If necessary, you can get out the back way and take to the mountains." By day young Dean Crain went up higher on the mountain side and hid in the laurel thickets. There he stayed, alone with his thoughts, his questionings, and his fears. At

night he sought food and shelter with the kinsfolk. He never revealed all the turmoil of mind and soul that took hold of him during those days; and as he later told the story, he trembled nervously to think that he had nearly killed a man. After three days his father returned for him, and he went home. Staggs survived and apparently never sought revenge. Later he was fatally shot by a Negro who, unlike Crain, could not restrain himself when provoked by a drunkard.

This disenchantment with moonshining increased the more Dean came to feel the influence of Christianity. Throughout the years his mother had been subtly molding his character into her image. Almost daily he heard her read aloud the Bible, either to herself or to other members of the family. More than twenty times she had read the Bible through from cover to cover. In addition to her strong Christian interests and character, she had an inborn sense of honor, of beauty, of right principle, of order, and of cleanliness. She encouraged Dean to attend church, and there twice a year he saw the members observe the Lord's Supper using as memorial tokens unleavened bread squares baked by a deacon's wife and blackberry wine served in two glass goblets. Then, too, Crain's father, despite his lack of learning, respected the Scripture and the religious sentiments of his wife and neighbors. When company came, he would call on them to "ask the blessing" at the table if they were known to be in the habit of doing so. All these acts of deference toward God — Bible reading, Holy Communion, and praying — had a mellowing effect on the boy.

Two of his sisters — Elizabeth, six years his junior, and Emma, ten years his senior — had early in life professed faith in Christianity and were trying to live wholesome lives. Their girlhood deaths in 1896 "made a profound impression" on Dean. When he was fifteen, both girls fell sick to the ravages of spinal meningitis. Elizabeth, aged nine, died first; Emma, aged twenty-three, died eight days later. Before their deaths,



each prayed for Dean and Buford. After Elizabeth's death, Emma told her mother of seeing an angel come into the room to get her sister and of sensing that she herself would not get well. Before dying, she prayed earnestly for the boys, calling their names and asking the Lord to have mercy on them for their sins.

The boys heard these prayers, and Dean later wrote that "About three years after their deaths, I was riding along the road and became awful convicted of sin. I could hear those prayers as plain that day as when they were uttered. I did not tell anyone about my trouble. I just worried all to myself. I tried to pray but it was hard. One day I thought I would go off and pray aloud, and I went up in the stable loft and tried to speak aloud and see how it sounded for a bad boy to pray, but the devil said to me, 'You fool, you, somebody will hear you. You had better get down from here.' I took him at his word and got down. Then I went into the yard and sat on a stump and prayed silently but got no relief. I had had some feelings that I ought to be a Christian when I was eleven years old, but some older boys made light of religion and caused me to abandon the idea. I came very near being lost. . . ."

About this same time Dean heard the Reverend A. D. Bowers preach on the incompatibility of Christianity and moonshining. Bowers, whom Dean later called the "Hero of the Dark Corner," was, according to Buford, "the first man we ever heard declare against making, selling, or using whiskey." The Reverend R. B. Vaughn also preached against the liquor traffic. And some members of "the community resented" very much this intrusion into their affairs by these two ministers.

Thus by the age of fifteen Dean was strongly coming under the sway of Christian teaching. For some time now the combined influence of his mother and sisters, of W. H. Cannada, the "religious" teacher, and Bowers and Vaughn, the "temperance" ministers, was beginning to tell. In his young

mind the problem of professing faith was closely intertwined with two other issues. One of them has already been mentioned: How far was moonshining incompatible with Christian faith? Soon he would give a vigorous reply to the question. But at the time, he was unsure of himself; he was uncertain about rejecting the mores of his community. He had to pass through a period of Pauline struggle before he could receive the light. As it turned out, he renounced alcohol before he became converted to Christian teachings — partly because of its horrible consequences, as he knew from experience, and partly because of the religious influences at work on him for half a decade. He has told of his breaking from alcohol in his autobiography:

“One day while my brother E. B. and I were hoeing corn, I said to him, ‘Suppose we quit drinking.’ He stopped, scratched his head and looked about him and said, ‘How long?’ I told him until Christmas anyway. He said, ‘Oh, that won’t do, we will need some during corn shucking time.’ I said, ‘Let’s try it until Christmas.’ Finally, he agreed, and we stood faithfully by our agreement. It was an ideal June day. The blue mountains loomed up in front of us, the birds were singing and hopping in the willows and maples along the creek. I felt a great deal better. I could enter into the sweet music of the birds as I never had before. The water in the old spring where we ‘slaked our thirst’ looked clearer and tasted better. By Christmas all had gone so well that we decided to leave off drinking indefinitely. The people had begun to take notice that I had been doing better and they would say that he may turn out and make a pretty fair man after all. Some people encouraged us to stay quit.”

A second problem associated with Dean’s becoming a Christian was a fear that “if I ever surrendered. . . I would *have* to preach.” He tried, therefore, to become a Christian without getting professionally involved, and because of the vigor with which he usually entered into tasks, this attempt



meant for him procrastinating indefinitely rather than committing himself half-heartedly.

Meanwhile in 1897 at the age of seventeen and still not a Christian, Dean enrolled in North Greenville Academy in Tigerville. He was by now eager for learning and wanted desperately to overcome his ignorance. Here as in the early grades, the curriculum lacked variety, but Dean improved his ability to express himself, and he came to know more about the history of human achievements and about the philosophical ideas of great thinkers. Because of financial reasons he was not able to stay in school more than three months of the term, but he felt that during that short time he had made a great discovery: "Somehow or other from this school I had gotten a new vision of things." He had received an insight into the higher values of civilization, and he knew now definitely that the whiskey business, as well as drinking whiskey, was wrong, and from that time on he never made or drank another drop.

During this first session at the Academy, he walked the five miles each way to and from Tigerville. Many experiences encouraged him and taught him the worth of kindness and friendship. Other experiences stirred the interest of other persons in his possibilities. His mother, for instance, "rose way before day," prepared his breakfast, and put up a dinner for him. She would say every morning, "I can't help you, son, with your books, but I will do what I can. Be a good boy and learn your lessons." The long walk consumed a great deal of time, but Dean spent it studying and reciting as he walked. When he got home at night, his mother was always sitting up waiting for him. During a later session after he had returned to school, he was befriended by Mrs. Dan Stroud and never failed to be grateful to her. One rainy day in March, having become soaked to the skin, he stopped at the Stroud house to get out of the rain. Mrs. Stroud asked him in; and seeing how wet he was, she told him to take off his clothes

and get to bed. She hung his clothes by the fire, and by the next morning they were dry. Many times she encouraged him and extended him kindnesses. Years later, while he was pastor at Pendleton Street Baptist Church, this good woman died, and Dean Crain got up out of his sick bed to conduct her funeral.

Dean returned to the Academy in the fall of 1898, but this time he could stay only two months. After leaving school the second time, he went to work in earnest to earn enough money for the following year. He managed to clear forty-five dollars and was thus able to re-enter school the next November. His father had encouraged him to return and had given him a small sum of money in addition to board. But Dean's studies were so hard and he spent so much time walking the five miles each way that he decided to board nearer the school in the home of the mother of Guy Gullick, the former Probate Judge of Greenville County. He stayed in school five months of this session — the longest so far — before he exhausted his money.

Leaving school a third time for lack of money, Dean took a job as clerk in a nearby country store operated by B. F. Neves. "This was a great schooling in itself," Dean said, for here he learned a great deal about people. Neves paid Dean six dollars and twenty-five cents per month and boarded him. In later years Neves told M. C. Donnan, principal of the school, that the first time he ever saw Dean Crain he was a big boy with big feet. He had on blue overalls that stopped about half way between the knees and ankles and a home-made coat with sleeves half way up to the elbows. Despite this appearance, something in Dean's personality impressed Neves, who came to believe in the boy and in what he might become.

But these were depressing months for Dean. He was earning so little that it looked as if he might never return to school. If he could only find some way of earning more money, he



thought. He decided that teaching temporarily in a public school might be rewarding, but when he took the examination in the spring of 1899, he failed. He determined to try again. He studied hard, and the second time he passed. He received a third grade "B" certificate and was so proud of it that he did not much care what grade it was. He saw it as a means of earning money to further his education.

All during these two years spent partly enrolled in the Academy, Dean continued to wrestle with the question of becoming a Christian, and before he began teaching he had finally settled the question. At the time of his conversion the Reverend R. B. Vaughn was holding a revival at Ebenezer-Welcome Church. This pastor, who drove thirteen miles to preach once a month, deeply moved him. Not only was Vaughn a frank counselor; "I believed," Dean wrote, "that he had the real article. One day he invited all who wanted to be prayed for to give him their hand. I gave him my hand . . . but this meeting ran its course and I was not saved. During the next spring they organized a Sunday School and elected me secretary and teacher of a class of young ladies. This was a hard job for a sinner, but they said it was the best they could do. Well, I knew I was not fit and they knew it. I was sorry . . . . I was trying to get . . . [religion] all by myself."

The next summer another meeting was held while school was still in session. Every morning at the preaching hour the teacher lined up the pupils and marched them across the road to the preaching services, and the whole school sat together. This year the people, especially the women, seemed more interested. The men and boys were mostly all sinners. "I guess there were two or three church members who did not drink or have anything to do with whiskey." A cousin, Perry J. Harrison, had been saved at Tyger Church, and it "showed in his face." "I determined to get religion if there was any for me," Dean wrote in after years. And soon that day came. Dean and Buford were saved together. Writing

about the occasion later, Dean said: "I decided to put my trust in the Lord, and when I did that, I felt in my soul that I was saved. I cannot tell in language how I rejoiced. Human tongue was not made to handle such experiences . . . . People need not doubt the Lord. He will save the meanest if they will let Him. . . . I cannot tell all about it, but I'm trying to live it."

Buford never forgot the day either. "Dean was six feet and two inches tall and weighed 180 pounds, and we both were barefooted and in our shirt sleeves." The boys were two of twelve converts baptized on the third Sunday in September, 1900. A large crowd witnessed the baptism. Among them were some of Dean's erstwhile companions, the bootleggers, who climbed the trees to watch.

After their conversions Dean and Buford ventured into fields of real service. They believed, as Dean put it, that "A man must go to work when he has been saved." They started by holding prayer meetings, especially among their moonshining friends. They had no desire now "to go back to that crowd but wanted to get the other fellows out of it. . . ."

As time passed, Dean and Buford were chosen to places of responsibility in the church at Ebenezer-Welcome. Dean soon became a deacon and Buford the clerk. One of their first crucial problems illustrates the stubborn zealousness with which the brothers would always handle religious crises. One member of the church had begun drinking too much, and it was agreed among them that Buford should go to see the sinner. Dean warned him not to "get into any trouble with that man."

"I won't. I'll just do the best I can to lead him right," Buford promised. As he walked, he thought. He knew "he had a problem facing him. He knew mountain people despise force, and he wanted to lead the man to see what was right for him to do. How to do it? He did not know." But he went



on his chore, and when he returned, he carried a sad countenance.

"What's the matter?" called Dean. "Didn't you persuade him?"

"I persuaded him all right," replied Buford, "but I had to whip the fellow before I could do anything with him."

Now a Christian, eagerly ambitious to pursue an education, and equipped with a third grade "B" certificate to teach, Dean at twenty set out upon the quest for a teaching job. He rode a borrowed mule, he said, but he felt important: "I was going out to instruct the ignorant." He rode about ten miles before finding a school in need of a teacher. But he applied in such a pitiable state that he was immediately turned down. "As I rode up on that mule," he wrote, "my pants and socks had gotten on such bad terms that they had parted. The briars had torn my shins and they were bleeding. I wore number eleven shoes and my feet hung so near the ground that my shoes were caked with dust. It was in this condition I rode up to a trustee. I tried to look as well as I could under the circumstances. It was about twelve o'clock and I was hungry, hungry enough to eat that mule. The trustee didn't ask me to stay to dinner. He was cutting weeds on the roadside while I talked to him. When I told him my business, he looked me up and down. His gaze lingered on the place between socks and pants and finally he said as he looked out across the fields and drew a long breath, 'We want a teacher and want one bad. We have had several applications, but I'll tell you, young man, we want a sort of civilized man to teach our school.' "

"Yes," said Dean, lowering his head in humility, "it would be better to have such a man if you can find one."

Dean's rebuff so discouraged him that he gave up searching for a school that fall and remained at home until the next session of the North Greenville Academy opened and then returned to school for a few months. School over, he applied for the job of teacher in his old home school, and the trustees

decided to try him. Dean taught here at Ebenezer-Welcome for five or six summers, relying largely on the Bible which he interpreted literally: "I did not know much Bible," he wrote, "but I just took it for what it said. I found that it was a great force in my life and helped me in my teaching. I taught above five or six hundred children during the five or six years I had charge of this school."

Most of the children liked Dean Crain as a teacher. One pupil, now Mrs. Velma Morrow Taylor, who learned to read sitting on his knee, has given a report of his classroom manner: "He always began the day with a devotional period. When he called our class to come sit on the long recitation bench in front of him, he would always let one or two children stand by him and look on his book. He never called on me or Alma [her twin sister] without first talking with us a little. I remember how sometimes he would say (just to put us at ease and keep us from being frightened), 'What did you girls have for breakfast?' We would answer, and then he would ask, 'What did you wash it down with? Coffee?' We would giggle and say 'No,' for children were not allowed to drink coffee in those days. His little joke over with, he would then proceed with the lesson. Sometimes he would take us up, one on each knee, to hear our reading lesson. He would rub his chin across our cheeks and ask, 'Does that stick?' 'Yes, sir.' He would grin, 'Well, I didn't shave *this* morning' (none of the men shaved every day in those days: most of them just on Sundays). This bit of fun over, we would then read our lessons. He was kind with us, but firm. Sometimes he would switch a boy, but I don't remember that he ever had to punish a girl in that way."

But another little girl, who was perhaps frightened by his enormous size and unhurried, authoritative speech, was frightened stiff when she heard him say: "If you don't do so and so — I'm a-going to whup you." Dean Crain said that he had a "hickory switch" which stood in the corner and that it had about as much information in it as the teacher had.



Going into his third decade, Dean Crain had already taken the crucial steps leading toward a career in religion. He had been effectively stirred by the mystery and beauty of nature to an awareness of the Universal Creative Power. The formal education that came to him at ten had aroused his curiosity and developed his mind. Visits to the world beyond his isolated mountain community had opened up new interests and desires. Of great importance was his realization of the follies and horrors of a life devoted to alcohol. But most important was his conversion to Christianity in 1900. During these formative years and through such experiences as have been related, Dean Crain was awakened to the possibilities of a new day for him, a day of new life and light. He wrested from every experience the maximum challenge. He responded with vigorous determination to pass from darkness into light — mentally and spiritually. As this period of his life ended, Dean was fully dedicated to completing his education and branching out into some area of service, as of then still undetermined.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Student Days at Furman University and Richmond College*

For several years Dean alternated his time between teaching and attending North Greenville Academy, but in 1902 he received a new challenge. In that year A. E. Brown, Superintendent of Mountain Schools for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, came to Tigerville and preached a sermon on Christian education in which he described the various Baptist colleges and their programs. This sermon inspired Dean to think seriously of going to college. A year later he had made up his mind.

In the fall of 1903 he went to Greenville to enroll in Furman University, which was then a much smaller school than it is now.\* Geer Hall, Fletcher Hall, Webb Administration Building, the Library, and the dining hall had not been built; and the building later used for the Infirmary then housed the administrative offices. The president was Edwin M. Poteat, who continued to serve throughout Dean's student days. The faculty of twelve members, only one of whom had a doctor of philosophy degree, offered a curriculum leading to the degrees of bachelor of arts, bachelor of sciences, and master of arts. Some of the faculty members also taught courses in Furman Fitting School, later abandoned, a school for boys

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\*Written before the move in September, 1958, to the new campus located five miles north of Greenville on the Poinsett Highway.

who were preparing to enter Furman University. No record remains, strange as it may seem, of the number of students enrolled in 1903; but according to the number of degrees that were conferred between 1905 and 1910, the total enrollment in 1903 probably did not greatly exceed 125. Twenty-four students received degrees in 1910 when Dean Crain received his.

Tuition at the time was fifty dollars a semester. Food and lodging were available at nine to ten dollars a month. Text-books and society fees per student cost about fifteen dollars a year, and laundry charges totalled about seven dollars a year. To get through his first year, Dean would have probably needed a little more than one hundred dollars.

All students were required to take three years of English, Latin, and mathematics and at least two years of Bible, history, philosophy, foreign languages, and laboratory sciences. Juniors and seniors could choose electives from among any of these same subjects. Science courses included astronomy, mineralogy, and physiology, in addition to chemistry, biology, and geology. No social studies, except political science, were then offered; psychology, sociology, criminology, and education had not then been introduced into the curriculum; nor were there any courses in business administration, physical education, or secretarial skills. Dean Crain had his hands full anyway with English, Latin, Greek, Algebra, and Bible during his first year as a "green" mountaineer boy.

"My, but I was green," Dean later wrote, referring to his appearance on the campus. Classes had been in session for two weeks when he arrived, and he said he "stayed two weeks before I knew the school was open." He was first sent to talk to Professor B. E. Geer, who told him he "would have to stand an examination. . . . I told him that I knew he could not ask me a question which I could answer, that I knew less than anyone there or anywhere else. 'Well,' said he, looking me up and down with a sympathetic smile, 'You can enter



without an examination.' ”

When Dean went to register, he was asked, “Who is your overseer?”

“I am.”

“Who is paying your way?”

“I am.”

“To whom should we send your reports?”

“Send them to me.”

That was “some experience for those professors,” said Dean in later years. “They had never seen anything that looked like me and knew as little.”

After his matriculation, Dean tried to adjust to his new routine as college student, but found himself hampered and intimidated at every step by the hazing policies of the upper-classmen. A rough group called the “See More” Club came for Dean one night and took him to the third floor of Montague Hall into a room where a side-board was nailed to the floor. Forming themselves into a large ring on the floor, these boys then told Dean to step into the ring, handed him some boxing gloves, and told him to put them on. He looked at the gloves, looked over the crowd, stretched himself to full height, flexed the muscles in his towering body, and offered to fight “bare fisted.” He told the crowd that if he got killed they should write to D. H. Grant, the undertaker in Greer, and “if you are the one that gets hurt, you are getting your pay.” No one stepped into the ring.

Later the “See Mores” tried again. They went to Dean’s room where he was studying with his roommates, Jerry Barton and Wash Pinson. Dean asked Wash if he had a knife and said to him, “Give it to ‘Ruf.’ When I knock a hog in the head I want it stuck.” The crowd vanished.

Once more the “See Mores” came — this time at night and *en masse*. They knocked on Dean’s door, determined to “give him the works,” but when Dean opened the door and saw the crowd, he calmly reached behind the door and pulled

out a five-foot rail and told them, "Now, boys, I did not come down here to school for such foolishness. I came here to study, and I want you to leave me alone. The first one that steps through that door is going to get this."

One of the students went to Professor Geer and complained about Dean's threats and refusals to cooperate with the hazing customs. Knowing that he had been reported, Dean went to Geer and said, "If you are going to send me home when I get into trouble, then go ahead and send me." Dean later heard Geer's opinion: "As soon as he breaks up that 'See More' gang, I will buy him the best suit in town."

After he had boarded a while and his money had grown scarce, Dean decided to economize by "batching." With four other young men he rented a room and entered a new phase of complex living. Meal times were particularly difficult. "We cooked on the grate," he said. "The vessels became rather dark with coal smoke, but we cooked just the same. One day," he said, "we bought some cabbage." Dean cooked it three times, but that apparently was not enough. The roommate named Barton became so sick that Dean had to call in the doctor. "It took a great deal more," he concluded, "to get the cabbage out of Barton than it did to get it into him. He did love to eat." When Dean learned that Barton could eat rice, he bought three pounds and in his ignorance boiled all of it at once. In no time he had a "peck of rice," and poor Barton "had again lost his appetite." Soon, however, Crain and his roommates mastered the art of cooking and got along together well. He and Barton remained life-long friends.

Not only were matriculation and student living a bewildering experience. Dean also had difficulty in adjusting to the complexities and refinements of urban civilization for which his mountain background had not prepared him. Like many backwoods boys away from home for the first time, he "thought Greenville was the biggest city on earth. I fell off the streetcar one night and skinned myself all over. The con-



ductor asked me if I was hurt. I did not have enough sense left in me to answer."

His ignorance and lack of manners always seemed to trip him, so that he referred to himself in this period as "a round peg in a square hole." Innocent of fashions, as he was of city transportation, Dean was deceived into buying a formal "split-tail coat" from a prankster, Luther Courtney, for two dollars and a half. He received such a ribbing when he wore it to a baseball game that he took it off and never put it on again.

One painful experience particularly lingered in detail in his memory. "I had heard a great deal about society in the city," he wrote, "and desired to know something about it. One day I received an invitation to a tea. I put on the best I had and went to attend the party. They were well educated people. As soon as I got there, I found I was in the wrong place. They asked me if I had read this book and that book. I told them no. Finally, I got tired of telling them no. Then I began to say, yes, I have read it, but it had been so long I had forgotten the leading characters in it. About eight o'clock tea was ready. We sat down around the table, two young ladies, the mother and myself. The table was too low for my knees, and I eased under the table and put it in my lap, but was a long ways from it then. They began to pass a few little things to eat. They had rings on their fingers. The little fingers stuck up as they raised the dainty cups to their lips. I had a forty-cent Sears and Roebuck ring on my finger also, but my finger would not stick up right. However, I made a desperate effort to keep in style. The last thing on the bill of fare was dessert and it was dessert. Being some distance from the table it refused to go. I eased the spoon under the piece, opened my mouth and began the journey to deliver the goods, but it was so cold and shivery and myself a little unsteady, it slipped out of the spoon into my lap. I left the rest for future reference, pushed back my plate and licked my mouth (nothing on it, however), and all was over so far as tea was concerned."



During these bewildering days of adjustment to campus-city ways of life, Dean was often lonely and ill at ease. He found at least one sympathetic friend in Professor C. B. Martin, at that time principal of the Furman Fitting School. Martin told Dean how he too had suffered, "bled and died," when he entered Furman. It was a comfort to Dean to learn that he was not the only one to find college life strange and humiliating. Dean nevertheless determined to see it through: "I had gone to stay the year out, or lay down my bones on the campus."

As it happened, however, he did not fully complete his first year. The reasons for his leaving are not clear; but whatever they were, he did not stay to take the final examinations. As the end of the session neared, he wrote his brother Buford to come for him at once. Buford came in a one-horse wagon and took Dean and his possessions home in the mountains.

The first incomplete year at Furman was by no means a dismal failure. Dean had gained much wisdom not entered on the record books. He had come to sense a greater change than ever before in himself. Toward the close of the year President Poteat had once asked him, "Well, how have you got on?" Dean had replied, "I just can't tell you, sir. The world is a new world to me. Everything is different!" President Poteat has perhaps correctly defined this personal change as "the mystery and joy of expanding powers. . . , the sense of safety in a fuller adjustment to all the conditions of existence."

Back home after a year at college, Dean marveled at the calm beauty of "God's country" in contrast with the confusion of the "man-made world" he had just left. He thought of the distant past of his youth and how pleasant it had been. But he knew that he "was not the same boy; never will be, all is changed. . . . I had seen and felt a new world."

Having seen and felt but having been deprived of staying in this new world, Dean was more determined than ever to continue his education. In October, 1904, he began teaching at

Locust Hill to make money to go back to college. Of this experience — Mrs. Crain laughingly related in later years — Webb Barton said, “They call him ‘Professor,’ and all the women are in love with him.”

During the year Dean seriously debated the question of a career: should he study law or prepare for the ministry? Finally under the influence of the Reverend J. E. McManaway, who preached at Tyger for a while during the year and who had attended Richmond College, Crain decided to go to Richmond for a year. If he should settle on a law career while there, he reasoned, he could enter the Richmond Law School; if he should settle on the ministry, he would still be at a denominational school.

On September 20, 1905, Hoke Crain carried his twenty-four year old son to the depot at Campobello to board the train for Richmond and his second try at higher education. “I shall never forget how mother looked the morning I left,” he reflected later: “She reached out her large sunburned hand and told me goodbye. It showed many years of toil, and she was bowed by heavy burdens, her face sad and furrowed. As I drove off, she stood in the kitchen door and gazed as long as she could see me. . . . I thought about everything she had ever done for me. . . . While at Spartanburg waiting for the Richmond train, I saw one of my old teachers, Professor S. F. Boyles. I told him where I was going. He said, ‘Be honest, work hard and keep your zeal for the right, and you will win out.’ As I resumed my journey . . . I was sad, in love,\* and homesick. This was enough to put an ordinary fellow to death, but my mind was made up. I never looked back. . . . I said, ‘Live or die, sink or swim, I am going to stay at this thing of getting an education until death or time runs out. . . .’ When I reached this conclusion all doubts left me, and I never thought of going home until school closed.”

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\*See below Chapter IV.



Although Greenville and Furman had revealed many mysteries of the world at large, Dean found in Richmond still more new and strange experiences. He reached Richmond at seven o'clock in the morning and took a streetcar to President F. W. Boatright's house. There while waiting on the steps he met a boy from Ontario, Canada, and after talking a while the two boys agreed to room together. "About eight o'clock," as he puts it, "the President came out and spoke to me and asked me in to breakfast. This we did. He had one of these tables that turn around. Someone began turning it and I held it — I did not understand. I was very much embarrassed, but it was too late."

Dean and his roommate were assigned to a room in Deland Cottage. They spent the day unpacking their belongings, cleaning up the room, and installing a bed; and in the evening they attended a reception in the Chapel. Although the bed was too short for his long legs, Dean curled up into it as best he could, eager for rest after traveling all the day and night before and after busying himself with details all that day; he fell into a deep sleep, but was not destined to enjoy it.

About two o'clock he was roused by strident shouting: "Get up, rats." Not understanding who were the rats, he had to be awakened by his roommate. When he finally caught on that here too he was to be hazed by the upperclassmen, he "went out of the bed like a skinned mule. We had no lamp," he wrote, "and I could not find my pants. In the dark I put on his. He was low and chunky and I was tall and lanky. Still they hollered come on, and I said I will not come until I get ready. I finally found the right pants, put them on and went with him. The crowd said to me, 'Get in front, old big one!' I obeyed the command. We marched out across the campus toward Memorial Hall. When they got there they put me up on a table and called on me to pat a tune. That just suited me, for I was fine at that. They made a young man by the



name of R. W. Grant dance while I patted. After they got through someone asked (Grant), 'Aren't you a preacher?' He said, 'Yes' and they said, 'Well, you make a bad out dancing! . . . The next on the program was a football game. We all lined up. I had never seen the game played, but I got in line. Some big fellow ran against me and it sounded like he had struck a mountain. . . ."

In a few weeks most of the hazing was over, and he was able to settle down to work. The English course was especially satisfying. But the best course he had was the "Life of Jesus." Professor R. E. Gaines made the gospels live for Dean, who no longer looked upon Christ from a distance. His professor of Latin, Foucheé, had a reputation for giving long assignments and for never laughing. One day he assigned three chapters in Caesar's *Gallic War*, fifteen sentences in Gildersleeve's *Latin Grammar* to translate from English into Latin, and two or three pages of vocabulary to learn. Dean spoke up and asked, "Professor, is that all?" Even Foucheé laughed.

At Richmond the call of the ministry soon became greater than the call of law. On several occasions he was asked to speak at neighboring mission stations; and although each experience gave him confidence and purpose, he had much to learn about sermon preparation, pulpit manner, and biblical exposition. During the Christmas holidays he went to Petersburg, Virginia, to fill an appointment for a fellow student. The mission in Petersburg, he had been told, was small. He and the law student who accompanied him were therefore quite surprised when they arrived to find 208 people in Sunday School. "I was so embarrassed," Crain remembered, "that I tried to get the lawyer to preach, but he would not. It was a fine place and the people were up-to-date. I doubt if there was anyone there who knew less of the Bible than I did, but I comforted myself with the fact that there was no one there who knew me or where I was from."

He was thus to receive a greater surprise, for at the close

of Sunday School the superintendent announced that the Reverend J. D. Crain, of Richmond College and of Greenville, South Carolina, would preach that night at seven-thirty. One church member invited him home, adding that his wife was from Greenville. Dean knew that "that would never do," so he declined and went home with another couple. He had made but little preparation to preach; he had even forgotten his Bible. That afternoon while he was trying to think of a subject, the wife of his host showed him every picture in her album "from Adam down to her wedding," which had recently taken place. Soon the "bell rang for church," and still he had no subject. By the time he entered the church, he was frantic. Remembering that he had recently heard a sermon on Jonah, he thought that he "could do likewise." On the pulpit he found a "Bible with all kinds of versions in it. It was a very large book and I hunted and hunted for Jonah. Between times I would call for another song and go on hunting for Jonah. After a time I found him. I began reading about him, about him running off. I read on to where he got into the whale, and then began reading on the opposite page and got him in the whale again. I closed the the book and said, 'Brethren, I have got Jonah in that whale twice and so far as I am concerned he can stay there.' The only thing I can say about my sermon was that it was apostolic. I took a subject and went everywhere preaching the gospel." Dean told the people the last he heard of the great fish was that he had swallowed Jonah and was making for the shore sick at his stomach. This he said did not surprise him, but he was surprised that the whale stood Jonah for three days and nights.

If Dean made a wobbly beginning in his preaching, he could at least take pride in his winning a medal in a speech contest. Four other students entered the contest, and all of them belittled Dean for being an uncouth sojourner from the Dark Corner. Their barbed words pricked to the raw Dean's "Dark Corner" pride so that he lay "down everything and



went to the State Library" to prepare his speech. He spoke last, and when the judges announced in his favor, he lost no time in reminding the contestants that he was the uncouth and unlettered farm boy from the Dark Corner — much to the chagrin of the losers.

When final examinations ended in June and Dean was ready to return home, he was convinced of two things that the year in Richmond had helped him decide: he would definitely not pursue law but would enter the ministry; and he would return the next year to Furman University where he could be closer to his loved ones and his native country.

In the summer of 1906 Dean again taught at his home school at Ebenezer-Welcome and that fall re-entered Furman. To help pay his expenses Dean took a job cleaning, filling, and keeping lit the kerosene lamps that burned in the corridors of Montague Hall. He received \$2.50 a month for this task.

Most of the college subjects that he studied fascinated Dean, now a serious ministerial student. He particularly enjoyed philosophy and ethics and the Bible. In his autobiography he wrote that some students lose their Christian faith studying philosophy, but as taught by O. O. Fletcher, "I came through with my faith stronger than ever." He praised President Poteat for his course in ethics: it was "a great help to me." Poteat vividly set before him, he wrote, the "unselfish life" of Christian service and of love. It was hard, he added, for me, a "mountain man reared with the ideals that I had set before me in my early youth, to love my enemies and pray for them that spitefully used me." Dean also gave credit to Professor Geer for helping him to get meaning from Luke 19:7 and for encouraging in him a similar evangelistic approach as a "guest among sinners."

The highlight of the first year back at Furman was another speech contest which he entered — and won. During the Christmas holidays he worked hard on his speech. He turned



on its side a large wooden wheat box, sat at the open end with his feet in the box, and studied before the open fire in his parents' home. After dark, he continued by the light from the burning logs and from a sputtering brass oil lamp. His second victory in public speaking greatly encouraged him to participate in debating throughout his college career, and before his graduation he had achieved distinction in this field.

A growing maturity of mind and increasing skill in public speaking soon brought Dean opportunities for student pastoral work. During his first year back at Furman he supplied several times at the Laurel Creek Baptist Church. His zeal so impressed the deacons of this church that by the fall of 1907 they felt that he fulfilled the qualifications of sincerity and conviction for the Baptist ministry, and they asked his home church at Ebenezer-Welcome to ordain him. The service was held in October, 1907. The Reverend R. B. Vaughn preached the ordination sermon. Buford Crain, who was still the clerk of the church, recorded that the Reverend F. L. Davis, clerk of the presbytery, and the Reverend F. L. Turner represented the ministry and that A. L. Campbell, Dennis Crain, B. F. Henson, Terrell Brown, J. B. Dill, W. M. Henson, and E. B. Crain were the assisting deacons.

Dean also served as pastor to churches in New Liberty, Mush Creek, Washington (near Greer), Ebenezer, Flat Rock (Anderson County), and Reunion Church (Pickens County). Usually he was pastor of two churches at a time, and the salary at each church was about \$300 per year. He conducted services once a month on a Saturday afternoon and the following Sunday morning.

During these student pastorates, the traits characteristic of his later ministry began to emerge. His approach to problems was never roundabout but always straightforward; he was often blunt, tactless, and fearless in saying what he thought, reminiscent of the legendary "fighting pastors" of the early frontier who backed up moral precept with physical force.

Once at Mush Creek, for instance, when two members became animated in an argument over song books, the strapping young giant of a student preacher said that the two men could go with him and the deacons outside under the big oak tree and "knock it out." "Oh," they said, "we don't want to fight." "Then, quit talking about it," commanded the preacher.

Another time at Flat Rock Church Dean preached against drinking and gambling to a group of influential church members who had a reputation for indulging in these vices. They did not like his plain preaching and wrote a nine-page letter which they nailed to the pulpit. They claimed that "the church was a-going down" and that it had been going down ever since he had been there. Crain, who had been to visit a sick woman, returned to the church as three or four drunken men staggered out. When he came again for services on the regular Saturday afternoon, these same men came early, bristling for trouble. Dean Crain, six feet-four inches tall, strong of brawn, and fearful of no man, set aside his ministerial dignity and looked the lot over. He said he would take them on one at a time and that he would "lick them all." He added that in the country where he came from "people didn't take any notice until after fifteen or twenty were killed." He preached that day without benefit of their presence.

In this same church his stout arm and strong heart ended a vicious dissension over song books, led the church to take away the deaconship from a man known to be a gambler, and brought the people to cease desecrating the Lord's Day. Before he left Flat Rock, he was assisted by J. E. McManaway in a stirring revival meeting which brought sixty-eight new members into the church. Crain baptized fifty-eight of them.

In these early days as student pastor Dean gained experience in nearly all the official acts of the ministry. He and Buford had earlier performed a "funeral" service and had comforted the dying. He was now preaching regularly and helping to decide church policies. His first baptismal service



was at Reunion Church, now Smith Grove, in Pickens County. A young girl named Betty Whitlock joined the church in the late fall, and the deacons had to break the ice off the pond so that the student preacher and the candidate could go down into the baptismal water. Crain preached his first sermon at Reunion Church, which paid him \$40.00 a year, to a "congregation" consisting of one man "fresh off" the chain gang. Because of a pouring rain, which had prevented a large attendance, Dean spent the night with his one-man congregation.

Dean's first wedding ceremony seems to have been to unite an eloping couple who came to his home riding on a mule. The groom had asked:

"You Rev. Crain?"

"Yes."

"Can you marry us?"

"Yes."

The groom helped the bride off the mule, and the couple sat on a box at the well. Dean's mother put on a clean apron, tidied up her hair, and came out to be a witness. When the ceremony was over, the mountain youth asked "what the pay was." Crain replied, "I don't charge any set amount; just give me what the bride is worth."

The young man looked at the girl, looked at the mule, looked at Dean, put the girl on the mule, and said, "Well, preacher, much obliged," and rode away.

When Crain assumed his first denominational duties as member of the Executive Board of the North Greenville Association in 1908, while pastor at Mush Creek Baptist Church, he had proved that he was ready for wider service.

Meanwhile he was still working to complete his college education. At the close of the session of 1909-1910, he arrived at the "long, looked-for climax," for which he "had been striving and sacrificing for twelve long years." Crain apparently did not graduate high among the twenty-four students of his



class. His grade of 60 in Latin for the first semester of his junior year and his grade of 50 in Bible for the second semester of the same year seem to have been his lowest grades during his last two years, but these grades kept his average low; he did much better in philosophy, political science, and especially history, in which he once received a grade of 94. Crain's thesis, a requirement which all candidates for the degree had to satisfy, was political and social in nature, "The Tide of Immigration."

Despite his mediocre scholarship, due primarily to inadequate educational background, Crain's other achievements, especially in oratory, were outstanding. He was, for instance, one of the four candidates in his class chosen to give a commencement oration, the title of which is not known. His ministerial work had obviously given him invaluable experience. He had been one of the outstanding debaters in the Philosophian Literary Society: he had won the Debater's Medal in 1907 and the Rhodes Orator's Medal in 1908; he had served as treasurer of the Philosophian Literary Society in 1907-1909 and as president of the Gamma Section in 1909-1910. He had also served on the staff of the *Echo*, the student literary magazine, in 1908-1909. He had a reputation as one of the more zealous and outspoken of the ministerial students; he was called in the *Bonhomie*, the student yearbook, the "preacher-pedagogue . . . the leading man in the Blue Ridge mountains," and was prophetically listed as having "written a book. . . , *The Conversion of the Moonshiners*, which is attracting world-wide attention." He had also made many warm friendships, among them Porter M. Bailes, who later described Crain as "one of the outstanding students" in the University when Bailes had entered in 1908. "There soon developed," Bailes wrote, "a warm friendship between us, though he was ahead of me in his class. We found him to be one of these gifted, talented men with a big body and an open mind and a heart of pure gold. There was nothing deceptive

or insincere anywhere in his soul. If he believed in a thing, he was willing to put all he had in it and he did not hesitate to let others know how he stood on any issue that might be before the student body. He never pussy-footed.

"Because of this fact," Bailes continued, "he did not have the good will of all the student body, but he did have the high respect and confidence of every student. His life was an open book and men found him to be on the right side of every moral issue. . . . I have heard him as a student debate and declaim and have seen him preside, discharging both functions with ease and tact, and have found him always ready to contribute something worthwhile to every discussion."

Perhaps the greatest value of Crain's college experience was that it nurtured him in the Christian faith, a faith already implanted in him by his mother and by the itinerant ministers who visited the Dark Corner in his youth. No questionings of ultimate issues seem to appear in his life hereafter. He had moved from an ignorant youth in a primitive, violent, and un-Christian environment through a stage of wonderment and curiosity, and he had finally reached the "peace that passeth understanding." His college experience deepened and widened his faith and made him rest confident in it. Looking backward, Crain has said, "A college is a place where the currents of thoughts pass through. . . . The other day some boys over at Furman came to talk to me about one of their reading assignments — Tom Paine's *Age of Reason*. I told them that 'if you don't know enough to throw out the trash you had better quit. Go ahead and read it; then forget it.'" And so his life hereafter would be not a quest for truth; he had found the truth in the Bible, in the "good news" of God's love and plan of redemption for man. Instead his life hereafter was to be a quest for service. Before we trace his further career as a minister, let us sketch the story of his courtship and marriage.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Courtship and Marriage*

In his early life in the Dark Corner, Dean Crain had always been a boy's boy. He was big, strong, athletic, and mischievous. He could sing, dance, play a guitar, court the girls, tell funny stories, take a dare, and drink as much moonshine liquor as any other boy in the community. He was not to be surpassed in either work or play. His high-spirited masculinity made him a popular figure among his Dark Corner boyhood friends.

He had scarcely met the girl he was later to marry before he and a friend named Jeff Rector had played a prank on her. Ellen Wilson was a prim little school-girl with large brown eyes and dainty ways. She was the daughter of a prosperous farmer-merchant of Highland community, where the Crain children went to school after their own school had closed for a while for lack of funds. Mr. Wilson wanted Ellen to be a lady at all times and therefore sent her to school in high-top shoes, even in hot weather. One day at recess, Ellen surrendered to the desire to go barefoot with the other children and removed her shoes and long black stockings. She stuffed the stockings into the shoes, which she left in the school house, and skipped out to play. Dean and his friend Jeff, who had just caught a bull frog, saw their chance.

Jeff gave his bull frog to Dean who slipped into the school



house, removed the stocking from one of Ellen's shoes, and jammed the frog down to the toe. He replaced the stocking and ran back out to play. A short time before school "let out," Ellen began to put on her shoes and stockings, and out jumped the frog. Ellen squealed, and the school-room became a mad house as the frog jumped about frantically. All the girls began to scream, and all the boys shouted hysterically as they grabbed for the frog. The teacher never did find out who played the trick on Ellen and the class; no one would talk. Dean and Jeff and all the boys who were in on the prank pretended sanctimonious innocence. Ellen herself did not know until after her marriage to Dean Crain some years later that her husband had been the culprit in this embarrassing episode.

Dean and Ellen saw each other from time to time thereafter, but for the most part they moved among different sets of friends in their respective communities. Not until later did they become close friends and fall in love.

Meanwhile, Dean took a prominent part in the "social" activities of his community, especially in the "cornshuckings," the folk dances, and the boyhood escapades. The dim lights of lanterns and the mystic light of the harvest moon lent a warm romantic glow to the annual cornshuckings in the mountains. At these family gatherings, while their elders did most of the work, the boys and girls took every opportunity to be with each other. The young people also gathered frequently at a neighbor's house, moved out the furniture, and danced the lively old-time reels; they played "marching 'round the levels," "hog drivers," and "steal partners." One Christmas eve after a long day of freezing rain, Dean and two friends went to one of these neighborhood dances and on the way had to cross a river on a "foot log." When they reached this log, as Dean later told the story, it was "covered with ice. We could not walk on it. Some of us were about 'three sheets in the wind anyway.' One of the three said he could walk it. We

dared him. He started out on that ice-covered log, and when he got where the water was deep, he slipped and fell in. The others tried to reach him with a rail and fell in. I thought I could 'coon' that log. I put my arms around the log and tried to play the lizard. When I reached the small part of the log, it began to go up and down. Then I slipped around on the underside of the log — the way of the transgressor is hard."

On another early excursion into courtship Dean was more sober, but was again the victim of nature. He had called one afternoon on a beautiful girl of the hills and had enjoyed himself "so well," he said, "that I stayed until the moon had gotten low. . . . I would have stayed all night but they did not ask me. They did not know that I was afraid of the dark. One of my friends had been killed and buried in the river, the very river that I had to cross in going home. Times were very uncertain. It was dangerous for a person to be out after night. As I came down the hill a dog ran at me, and I jumped back and fell in a gully. When I got out I did not hunt that dog to shoot it — I went toward the river. When I got there I heard the water running over a stick. It was going flip, flip, just like someone coming down the river. This gave great encouragement to move on. I crossed the river but in too great a hurry to look for the foot log. Then I had to go through a dense thicket. It was dark and lonely. The wind was blowing and the tree tops were bending as though they would break. It was so dark I could not see, the path so narrow that I was afraid I might run against a tree. As I crawled through the thicket I heard a lone voice saying, 'Who is there?' I did not stop to tell who it was. I was in a hurry. When I got to the edge of the woods I put on steam. I was so scared I forgot . . . [that I had my] pistol. The moon was very low and I could see my shadow. I had on an old mackintosh overcoat with a cape on it. The tail of the coat stood out behind. I said, 'Crain, you are not doing your best.' Looking back I found the coat tail straight and I said, 'Now, Crain, you are going home.' The



pistol was of no value in hours like that."

When Dean Crain was about seventeen, Mr. Neves, his employer at the General Store at Tigerville, called him aside one day to talk with him. Pointing his index finger at the boy and holding it there until he stated his position, he gave Dean a talk on "girls" — how to act with them and how to choose the right one. "Don't promise too much," he said, "and be careful."

By this time, Dean had surveyed the field at the corn-shuckings and country dances, but had not yet been closely attracted to any single girl in his neighborhood. He had, instead, been drawn into a closer friendship with the brown-eyed lass from Highland, Ellen Wilson, in whose shoe he had placed the frog. He had met Ellen when they both were in school at North Greenville Baptist Academy. Dean had promised himself nothing, but he had begun to formulate some personal opinions and hopes for the future; these vague plans he kept to himself.

When he left school to teach, Dean continued to date Ellen Wilson, and he was glad each time that he returned to the Academy because he could then be near her all day. In fact, Ellen was partly responsible for Dean's intense ambition to finish his own education. "She was the best girl I ever saw," he said. "She became interested in me and encouraged me to go to school and keep on going. She would give me all kinds of good literature to read. I told her one day that if she was not careful she would get herself into trouble paying so much attention to me, but she said she hoped not. However, I kept my eye on her." As their friendship developed, Ellen gave Dean a great deal of encouragement to read, to study, and to succeed. Often she lent him books from her father's library, such favorites as *Ben Hur* and the novels of Thomas Dixon. She passed on to him volumes of poems, from which he drew inspiration to try his own hand at verses in later years. She also let him read copies of the *Christian Herald* and other



religious magazines which her father subscribed to.

As it so happened, this friendship actually got Dean himself into trouble on one occasion and embarrassed him in the eyes of one of his teachers. Professor Boyles had asked him to help out one night with prayer meeting, and Dean had agreed. But on his way from home to school, a distance of five miles, he had to pass the Wilson home where he stopped to visit; again while time went by, he "forgot himself"; he did not make it to prayer meeting. The professor publicly remarked at the services that he guessed the devil had detained Dean Crain. When Dean heard this explanation the next day, he told the professor, "You are right. But it was a mighty sweet devil." Ellen did not, of course, realize it; but by being the innocent agent of humiliating Dean, she was in effect getting part of her revenge on him for the frog incident.

By the time Dean decided to go to Richmond to college, he knew that he was "in love with the brown-eyed girl sure enough." He had already, it appears, asked for her hand in marriage and had been denied an answer until such time as he finished his education. Nevertheless, he now asked her again. "I went to her and told her I had decided to go to Richmond College the next year. She was delighted. I thought she should have objected, as it was a long way off, but she did not. Before the time came for me to leave I asked her again if she was going to be my wife. She said, 'No.' I told her that she had more sense than I thought she had. I continued to press the question. She continued to say 'No' and that was an awful word. Finally, she decided she would consider the matter if I would go on and finish school. That was a great encouragement to me. . . . As I . . . [journeyed to Richmond] I was sad, in love, and homesick. This was enough to put an ordinary fellow to death, but my mind was made up. I never looked back . . . I felt like I would die, but I decided it would be better to die at trying than it would to return and probably fool that sweet girl and both of us die, spiritually

and physically. Therefore, I said, 'live or die, sink or swim, I am going to stay at this thing of getting an education until death or time runs out.' "

Although Ellen had said "No" to the all-important question, Dean still felt that he had some "understanding" with her. He told her: "You do as you please about sort of going around and talking to these other fellows, but when you start thinking about getting married you had better see me." During the year, Dean wrote her often, and her regular replies kept up his hopes about her love for him. Meanwhile Ellen was also thinking; when she realized that she "was getting really interested in Dean, I just prayed if it were not God's plan for him and me that God would lead Dean to fall in love with somebody else."

Dean did not fall in love with someone else. Instead, upon his return from Richmond, he immediately made a date with Ellen — and unfortunate circumstances almost caused him to fall completely from her favor. Ellen carefully dressed in her choice dress — a flowered organdy over pink satin with a pink sash — and waited modestly yet excitedly for the arrival of her suitor. She sat and sat; still he did not come. She went upstairs, then down again. She repeated the routine many times until finally in disgust she went upstairs and took off her dress and "put on her temper." When at last Dean arrived, handsomely clothed in a blue serge suit and a white straw hat, Ellen was so angry that at first she refused to see him; but thinking better of herself, she dressed in an unspeakably old and plain dimity dress and went downstairs to hear what he had to say for himself. Dean said that his brother Buford had gone off in the buggy that afternoon and that a heavy downpour of rain had flooded the river so that he could not get back home. Dean all this time had been just as impatiently sitting at home waiting for the buggy. This explanation of a tempest of nature, as told pathetically by an unhappy suitor, helped to calm the tempest of emotions within Ellen. The



friendship thus weathered its own storm.

Shortly after his return from Richmond where he had definitely settled the question of his "Call to Preach," Dean Crain was invited to supply at the Highland Church where the people were more privileged and more advanced than people in Dean Crain's community.

Ellen very much wanted Dean to make a good impression on her church people. She wanted him to be correct in every way and to preach a good sermon. But Dean abruptly read his scripture, just as abruptly announced his subject, and then "just tore into things" in his own direct way with more zeal and force than polish and with more homespun wit and back-country stories than refined Biblical analysis. After the services Dean and Ellen walked quietly back to Ellen's house. Passing through the church cemetery and the Wilson's backyard, they entered the house and went into the "parlor." Alone now and feeling compelled to speak her mind, Ellen gently rebuked the young preacher for the abruptness of his delivery. Dean calmly reached for his hat, looked her in the eye, then stalked out of the house, saying, "Who called me to preach, you or God?"

Of course, this little tiff did not last long; and when the friends had grown reconciled, Dean's love was greater and Ellen had begun to change all her romantic ideas about love and marriage. From an interested and sympathetic friend who sought only to help and encourage a struggling mountain boy, she now could see herself in another role. She had not wanted "to marry a preacher," she said. "I had always dreamed of marrying a wealthy man, being a Southern lady, having my own horse and buggy, and just living a gracious life of ease. But I just plain fell in love with Dean Crain and forgot about marrying my rich man."

Ellen had other suitors who could have probably fulfilled her dreams of being a Southern lady. One of them was a young man from Greer who had a fine buggy and a beautiful



horse outfitted in a "shoestring," or storebought, harness. One Sunday afternoon this fancy suitor was among a group of young people already gathered at the Wilson home when Dean Crain arrived riding horseback on an old "mangey mule," which he tied out in the edge of the woods, and went in to enjoy the company. In the middle of the talking and entertainment, Mrs. Wilson came in to tell the Wilson girls that their grandmother was sick and that Ellen must take a colored girl with her and go stay at her grandmother's home for a few days. The friend from Greer with the horse and buggy offered to take Ellen, but she demurred, saying that she would go call the colored girl first. Excusing herself, she left the room, and Dean followed her. He and Ellen then quickly connived for Ellen to get her "things" while Dean hitched up her horse. By the time they were ready, the girl who had been summoned had come; and Dean drove Ellen and her girl down the road and some distance over the hill, leaving the other fellow sitting in the "parlor." Dean walked back, mounted his old mule, and went home. Later Mrs. Wilson sharply rebuked Ellen for her lack of courtesy to the other suitor: "Ellen, how could you be so rude to such a nice young man?" she said. But Dean and Ellen thought it a prime joke on the fellow with the patent leather shoes, whose horse sported a "shoestring" harness.

By this time Dean was back at Furman. Carrying a full load of studies, preaching irregularly on Sundays, and trying to keep his courtship in line all at the same time kept him more than busy; he was frequently hard put to keep his affairs straight. On one occasion he received permission from Dr. Fletcher to go home to see his girl and had taken the train as far as Taylors. "There I hired a one-eyed horse and buggy," he said, "and drove as far as Sandy Flat when the shaft-pin came out, hit the horse on the back and scared him. I laid the lines down, got out to put the pin back in place and the horse ran away; tore the shaft all up, but he got

tangled in the lines and fell. Mr. Bruce, who lived nearby, loaned me a buggy and fixed the hired one while I was gone. I told Ellen 'It costs more to come to see you than it would to keep you up and you're going to marry me.' "

Not long after this incident, Dean proposed marriage. This time Ellen was certain of her love for this young man of faith and ambition, this young man who was growing beyond his environment and moving toward full-time service for his Lord. Immature dreams of wealth and social rank faded before a sense of the destiny she would share linked in matrimony to this strong-willed man of powerful yet not completely realized capabilities. Though crude in many ways, he was, she now felt, the man God had chosen for her through life. She knew that she was in love; she knew too that God had approved of this love. Confident in her decision, she accepted Dean's proposal; and the engaged lovers sealed their love with a sacred kiss. Not before this point had Dean and Ellen expressed their love in the flesh. Speaking to young friends years later about the Christian attitude toward caressing and kissing, Ellen Wilson Crain urged that young people keep themselves sacred and pure for the right one chosen by God. "Why," she said, "one day I was something and then Dean Crain kissed me, and then I was something else."

When Dean asked Mrs. Wilson for Ellen's "hand" in marriage, he received neither rebuff nor encouragement. Since Mr. Wilson's death several years earlier, Mrs. Wilson had gained much experience in evaluating new events without emotional bias. She had a basket on her arm and was headed down the road to feed her turkeys when Dean stopped her and made his request. "I've always told my girls," she replied, "that if they made their beds hard they'd have to lie on them." "Yes, M'am," Dean said, as he thought to himself that she thinks "this one has hit bed rock." Neither one said any more.

After an engagement of three years, Ellen and Dean were married. The Reverend R. B. Vaughan, who had baptized the



couple some years earlier, performed the wedding ceremony on June 10, 1908, in the home of Ellen's mother. Each anniversary for years the grateful bridegroom sent Vaughn a gift in token appreciation for this ceremony that bound him in life to the woman who he felt was just as definitely called to help him in his ministry as he himself was called. Near the end of his life Dean Crain observed that "one of the drawbacks to the ministry is that . . . boys will not take time to let the Lord find them a wife. They go on and get married and sometimes the Lord has not called the girls to be preachers' wives. I have seen some great tragedies here. Now, I was not looking especially for a pretty one but one that had the right spirit and mind about the Bible."

The Reverend and Mrs. J. Dean Crain, newly wed, rented a large upstairs room in the home of Dr. and Mrs. C. T. J. Giles on Arlington Avenue in Greenville. Both the Crain and Wilson families donated foodstuffs — jams, jellies, ham, potatoes, and canned fruits — to stock the new household. Mrs. Wilson lent the couple a cow, and one of the deacons at Dean's church gave eight or ten sacks of cotton seed meal. Dean milked the cow faithfully each day, and Ellen used Mrs. Giles' churn to make butter. Until the cow went dry and Dean had to take an entire day to drive it 25 miles home, he and Ellen sold Mrs. Giles a regular supply of milk and butter.

The young student preacher and his bride dedicated their home to God. Each morning at the breakfast table he read the Bible and led in prayer. The couple kept up this habit of daily worship throughout life.

New at keeping house, Dean and Ellen each made mistakes. Once Ellen made Dean some shirts "and she made them," said Dean, "to open down the back, so I told her, 'Don't make me any more shirts — I had better buy them.' " As for himself, Dean said, he had "better not get started on his own errors" as husband.

Nevertheless, while learning to live as husband and wife,



they prospered in their love. Their first child, a son, whom they named James Wilson Crain, was born on August 12, 1909. Little Jimmy was only a few weeks old when his father began his senior year at Furman University in the fall of 1909. At chapel the students were seated alphabetically with the senior class occupying the front rows of seats, an arrangement which put Dean on the front row. One day at chapel a student handed Dean Crain an announcement to pass up to the platform to Dr. Poteat, the president, who unfolded the paper and read the belated announcement of the birth of James Wilson Crain, son of J. Dean Crain. The incident, which was both a prank upon and a compliment to a popular student, amused the students but caused Dean an intense blush of surprise mingled with anger at the thought that all the students had seen him stand up to give the paper to Dr. Poteat.

Marriage inevitably brought embarrassments; it brought a new group of adjustments and responsibilities; but it also brought intense happiness, a happiness that was, as we shall see later, not to fade with the passing of years. But most important, marriage brought a fully mature sense of purpose; in Ellen Wilson, Dean Crain had found a help-mate, no less divinely called to be a minister's wife than he himself was called to be a minister. A year after his marriage, Dean completed the requirements for his bachelor's degree from Furman University and was ready for his mission in the field.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *"Missionary"* *to the Mountaineers: 1910-1920*

Throughout his student days when he was widening the range of his emotional and intellectual experience and feeling his powers grow, Dean Crain nourished the conviction of his youth that the Dark Corner mountaineers were not beyond redemption. By the time of his graduation, he knew that his first full-time service would be to discharge an acute sense of responsibility to his native region. His graduation, he wrote, meant not an end in itself but a beginning, an opportunity to return "to my friends in the mountains and tell them intelligently about better things." He knew too "that they could not be forced into better living"; they could only be led. Crain, therefore, "left college with an overwhelming sense" that he must give part of his "life to the people of the Dark Corner."

Two paths of service lay before him — evangelism and education; to him the two were essentially one, for he regarded education insipid unless it were leavened by religion. Nevertheless he chose first the path of education, for with education he was at the moment most familiar. Immediately upon his graduation from Furman in 1910, he went to A. E. Brown, Superintendent of the Mountain School Department of the Home Mission Board, and "laid before him my desires." At that time North Greenville Academy was without a princi-

pal, and Brown helped get Crain appointed to this position. Dean Crain was overjoyed. There was no other capacity in which he would have preferred to begin his service than as head of the mountain school where he had worked so hard and sacrificed so much to receive an education. Crain assumed his duties with characteristic zeal.

In addition to the routine planning of the school program, executing the program, teaching, and providing leadership for the faculty, Crain put most of his time and energies into three kinds of administrative activities: disciplining unruly students, preaching, and enlarging the physical plant of the school by fund raising and supervising construction. Only the first duty was unpleasant. One of his students, Kirby McKinney, has recalled that as a wielder of authority, Crain was kind but firm. He wore a wide leather belt with a large metal buckle, and often he had to take off this belt and use it. In those days the school got some incorrigible youths who had been expelled from the public schools, and with them Crain had to resort frequently to severe methods of correction. But, McKinney says, Crain never turned away a boy who wanted an education, and usually those boys who were strictly chastised later came to love Crain because of his interest and fairness.

McKinney relates that he himself nearly felt the sting of the wide leather belt for violating the school rule against the use of tobacco. Once during a baseball game in which McKinney was playing catcher and chewing tobacco as he played, somebody "told on me to Professor Crain." The principal did not interfere with the ball game, but waited for the side at bat to be retired; then he stepped onto the diamond, walked to McKinney (about five feet, seven inches tall), put his hand on the boy's shoulder, and looked down into his eyes. "That hand felt like a ton, and I could feel that belt already, right there before everyone, too."

"Mac, are you chewing tobacco?" Crain asked.

"Yes, sir," he faltered.



"Spit it out!" the order came quietly but commandingly.

When the tobacco was out, "Professor Crain shook that long finger of his in my face and said, 'Don't you ever let me catch you doing that again! If you don't quit that chewing tobacco, you won't grow to be any bigger than a grasshopper. Now, go on with your ball game.'" Reminded of this incident many years later when McKinney was a middle aged man, still five feet, seven inches but weighing nearly two hundred pounds, Crain said, "I sure missed my guess about your being no bigger than a grasshopper."

A more enjoyable duty as principal was seeing to the spiritual welfare of his students. Each night after supper he led in a prayer meeting, he conducted the Sunday services, and periodically he planned a revival meeting at which he sometimes preached. His zeal that no one near him be unconverted often led to disappointments and frustration; but inevitably the same zeal led to a successful meeting with large numbers of conversions. Once during nearly a week of meetings with no conversions, Dean Crain asked the visiting evangelist to let him deliver the sermon on the following night. He preached sin, repentance, and hell-fire to a full auditorium of students and community dwellers. But at the invitation there was still no response. Obviously disappointed at the stubbornness of the congregation, Crain stepped down in front and pointed his long finger at first one known sinner and then another. "What about you, John? What about you, Joe? You, Ted? Don't you want to be saved?" Still there was no response. He turned dejectedly and remounted the platform. "Well, I can't make you repent and be saved, and if you *will* go to hell you will just have to go." He made one more forlorn plea. This time someone eased forward and asked for prayer. This one commitment released pent-up emotions; the congregation became convicted and began to stir, and thirty or more persons went forward. Among them was Kirby McKinney who has preserved the memory of this meeting.

Those joining the church by baptism were immersed in a "mudhole" edged with ice and frost. "But," says McKinney, "it did not make a one of us sick."

Physical improvements to the school under Crain's short administration were disproportionately large. Jean Martin Flynn, school historian, writes that "Under his leadership, North Greenville eagerly undertook a program of expansion." The North Greenville Baptist Association pledged \$3,500 and the Home Mission Board \$2,500 for the school. Crain's own unflagging efforts helped bring in the pledges. When Dean Crain left the school at the end of the school year in 1912, it was in better condition than he had found it. Four rooms had been added to the main building, and it had been veneered with brick and shingles. Sixteen rooms had been added to the boy's dormitory, and the second story had been shingled. Metal roofing had been put on all the buildings, and the whole cluster of buildings had been newly painted. He saw too that the grounds were enlarged by the Home Mission Board's purchase of the adjoining McKinney property for use as a school farm.

Crain's resignation from his position as principal of North Greenville Academy came as the result of a realization that this duty was merely part of a larger program. As he toured the countryside soliciting support for his school and learned more about the wider field of activity of the Mountain Mission Schools, he saw plainly the heart-breaking needs of his region and felt the call to be an agent for arousing the people throughout the state to these needs. He discussed with his wife the possibility of moving into this work, and once as they were riding along a mountain road, he said to Mrs. Crain, "Let's pray about it." He stopped his Model-T Ford by the side of the road, and there the dedicated couple prayed that God would "take charge" and show His will clearly. In a few days Crain was approached by field workers jointly representing the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and the South



Carolina State Board asking him to come and labor in the field of enlistment and evangelism in the state. Feeling that this invitation came from God, Crain prayerfully accepted and, moving his family to Greer, began his new work in the summer of 1912.

As evangelistic field worker and enlistment man, Dean Crain now served all the Baptist Mountain Mission Schools in South Carolina. His duties were to interest people in the religious and educational needs of the mountaineers, to raise money for schools and churches, and to interest the mountaineers themselves in the values of intellectual and spiritual growth. He was expected to make speeches, conduct revivals, and attend conventions to make reports on his work. From 1912 to 1920 Crain put into practical effect with all his energies his conviction that, as Jean Martin Flynn has reported him as saying, "the right arm of the church is evangelism, and the left arm, teaching." Without these arms, he felt, the church could become lifeless; "I have been a missionary ever since I've had any religion. I served some of the brethren before, but it was with a different sort of spirits."

All his activities of this period have not been preserved, so numerous were they. But Crain worked closely, we know, with many schools in the western part of the state and shared in their frustrations as well as in their successes. He retained a close tie with North Greenville from the beginning. One of the major undertakings of his new job was to raise money for rebuilding the girls' dormitory which had burned. The Home Mission Board gave \$2,000, and Crain raised \$4,000. He also helped raise money to establish Long Creek Baptist Academy, and in 1915 he spoke at the first commencement exercises, attended by a large crowd, among them J. E. White, President of Anderson College. Already by this time Dean Crain's zeal had brought his name to the attention of Baptists in the area. After the address, one aged minister was heard to exclaim, "The Morning Star has arisen in this country."



At a later exercise at Long Creek Academy, according to a letter that Dean Crain wrote to President White of Anderson College, Crain was present when Principal Raines announced that one of the girls had received a scholarship to Anderson. "You ought to have heard that mountain crowd clap their hands. It was the voice of a great hunger and thirst and gratitude breaking loose in the simple hills among God's simple children. . . . The thing that troubles my spirit is that so few of our colleges are really putting themselves out to give the poor boys and girls a chance. The man who is able to send his children to college generally has enough money to ruin them while they are there and after they get through. Money seems to carry a great amount of paralysis with it." Crain's remarks show his deep emotional involvement in the educational affairs of the Piedmont people.

For six consecutive years of his period as mission worker, Crain conducted a revival meeting at Bailey Military Institute at Greenwood, founded and presided over by F. N. K. Bailey. That Crain had a sympathetic and understanding nature in these younger days is nowhere better illustrated than in one incident that took place at Greenwood. At one of the revival services Crain preached on "Sin and How To Get Rid of It." A boy who had been stealing from the other boys became convicted of his sin but was afraid to confess publicly because of the disgrace he would suffer; he was afraid not to confess because he feared losing his peace of soul. He went to Crain and Bailey who, putting their arms around the penitent boy, explained that Christ would forgive him. They did not send him away from the school, but allowed him to return the stolen goods. In love they set the boy on the right path.

In 1920 Dean Crain revealed an interest, one that was to grow even greater in later years, in the quality and reputation of his alma mater, Furman University. In an article in the *Baptist Courier* he asked, "Why can't we make Furman equal to any school anywhere?" Baptists have a challenge, he went

on, to catch up with other colleges in education. "We need a chair of Bible in our schools and colleges." Then too he asked, "Why not teach law and medicine in our Christian schools?" Appearing in the middle of the article is an illustrative anecdote of some boys putting a wagon bed on the "wrong end before." The father got a piece of crayon and marked "B" on the front end. "That means before," he said. He walked around and marked "B" on the other end and said, "That means behind." Of course the boys went on making the same mistake. "Baptists," summarized Crain, "have done a great deal of that sort of teaching. . . . We must build bigger and equip better our schools and colleges."

Speaking to the Ministerial Union at Furman in December, 1920, Crain told the young preachers, "Education is a great thing, but without Christianity it is dangerous. Preachers should never graduate. They simply get a start in college by learning how to think. Then they must preach." Crain urged the ministerial students not to fear dishonest men; they are cowards, he said. He urged the students "to go forth to split the hide of sin from coast to coast." He admonished them to demand pay for their labors, for the preacher has as much right as anyone else to remuneration for hard work, and respectability is just as necessary among preachers as for other people. The reporter said of the speech, "Rev. J. Dean Crain made an address which proved profoundly impressive and . . . enjoyable for its rich humor."

All this time that Crain was striving officially to promote religious education at institutions like North Greenville Academy, Long Creek Academy, Anderson College, and Furman University, he was likewise providing educational opportunities on a smaller scale in his own home. Before he had left North Greenville, he had taken an orphan, Ben Odum, from either New Liberty or Mush Creek into his house and had helped him find odd jobs and had partly paid for his education. When Crain moved to Greer in 1912, he carried Ben with



him and made him a full member of his household. This arrangement not only gave Ben a home but provided Mrs. Crain with an older boy in the house during her husband's many extended absences. Ben attended high school in Greer and enlisted in the United States Army at the outbreak of war. He died of influenza aboard ship while returning from Europe and was buried at sea.

After Ben's death, Crain asked L. K. Simpson, principal of the Academy, to recommend another orphan to replace Ben Odum in his house. Simpson recommended J. Nelson Holtzclaw, a seventh grader, who says that his interview with Dean Crain "probably changed the whole course of my life. . . . Crain told me that he was looking for a boy that he could take into his house and help with the chores as another member of the family . . . he wanted someone with his family while he was away." In the summer of 1919 Holtzclaw came to live with the Crains and their children, James and Mary Ellen, each member of the family helping to make him feel at home. "The association and Christian influence of the home," Holtzclaw says, "made the following years the happiest of my life. Living with the Crains and receiving their inspirations and teachings, made me aspire to greater things. With Rev. and Mrs. Crain's encouragement and backing, I not only finished high school, but went on to graduate from Furman University and the Medical College of the State of South Carolina." Nelson was a cooperative, ambitious, and obedient boy who was proud and had high standards. Mrs. Crain "never had any fear that he would get in the wrong crowd, and I knew that Jimmie was in good hands when he was out with Nelson." J. Nelson Holtzclaw, M. D., is now county physician for Greenville County. His contribution to society is testimony of Crain's personal supplementary mission work.

The success of the mountain school program depended as much upon making known the needs of the people to the



Baptists outside the area as upon intimate associations with principals and church members within the area. For this wider publicization of needs, Crain relied first upon his attendance at the annual conventions of South Carolina Baptists and the Southern Baptists and later upon his writings—an autobiography, *A Mountain Boy's Life Story*, and articles in *The Baptist Courier*, the weekly news journal of the South Carolina Baptists. At a meeting of the Southern Baptists in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1913, Dean Crain made his first appearance before that body when he rose to comment on the Report of the Home Mission Board's Committee on Enlistment and Evangelism. Earlier, in Abbeville on December 5, 1912, at the state convention, he had made his maiden speech before that assembly in the same manner — by speaking to a report on Temperance.

When the Southern Baptist Convention met in Asheville, May 17-22, 1916, Dean Crain arrived late but found the schedule of business running even later. By the time the presiding officer recognized the work of the Mountain Mission Schools, the delegates were restless. Superintendent A. E. Brown introduced workers and products of the schools, and each one hurriedly and quietly crossed the rostrum. But since Crain's fame as a teller of humorous anecdotes was widely known and appreciated among his associates, someone called for Crain, who was the last one to be announced, to make a speech. Thinking quickly, Crain weighed the lateness of the hour against the urge to express his convictions and concluded on a pithy but apropos anecdote that simultaneously called attention to the time and to the tardiness of the Baptists in waking up to the needs of Mountain Schools. "An old lady," he said, "at Longnose Mountain told me this story about Warren Davis who moved there after the Civil War and built himself a cabin. He bought an old water works clock." Crain could feel the people getting more restless as he talked. "That clock kept good time for two years. One night it got out of

fix and struck one hundred and two times. Davis nudged his wife and said, 'Wife, git out of bed. It's the latest I've ever knowed it.' The audience had listened and then applauded. Crain had made both his points. Brown handed him the gavel, and Crain dismissed the assembly that night.

In 1914, two years after beginning field work with the mountaineers, Dean Crain published a short narrative of his life through his college days. His purpose was to acquaint the Southern Baptists with the squalid way of life of the mountain people and to show that they had "noble traits" of character and could be redeemed if the church would assume the responsibility. "It is the Dark Corner," he wrote, in a passage already quoted, only because men there are "ruled by sin" and "ignorance" and are "blind to the common blessings of the beauties of life." He regretted that the mountaineers had either been neglected completely or, worse, "abused by newspapers and public speakers." Shown a "kindly interest and a helpful hand," he told his readers, these people could be reclaimed for society and the gospel. They have "loyalty to each other," they "stand by their convictions," and when "re-generated by the gospel with the same earnestness and loyalty" that they show "by their defiances of the law," they will also "stand by their churches. Such a people we cannot afford to neglect. The cause of righteousness needs them as well as they need righteousness." Crain's plea was an impassioned one which undoubtedly awakened many persons to the problem. His own life gave dramatic illustration to his point that all mountaineers were not incorrigibly depraved and could be salvaged by the gospel and by education.

Short articles in *The Baptist Courier* began to appear shortly thereafter from Crain's pen. From 1917 to 1920 Crain wrote much to publicize the needs of the mountaineers. Many of his articles, however, dealt also with other subjects of vital personal or denominational concern, and nearly always these articles drew heavily upon the homely experiences of his



mountaineer background. Later in detail Crain's doctrinal commitments and manner of expression will be discussed.

When the United States entered World War I, the Home Mission Board added to Crain's already heavy responsibilities a position as one of the camp pastors at Camp Sevier, Greenville, South Carolina. The 30th Division was then training there, and around 15,000 of the soldiers in the division were Baptists. In this capacity Crain acted not as a government officer but as a civilian minister who served as a connecting link between the soldiers at Camp and mothers, fathers, and churches at home.

Crain reported the details of his ministry at Camp Sevier rather extensively in *The Baptist Courier*. By February 14, 1918, he and the two other camp pastors, Going and Seago, reported that they had started a school for the four or five thousand boys who could not read or write. The ministers met the classes one hour each morning and each afternoon. "We have conversions every day," wrote Crain. "The boys are more serious than the people think." By March 14, 1918, the men had organized two Bible classes for the soldiers. One class had seventeen members and the other thirty. On the Sunday preceding his report to the editor of the *Courier*, six boys had made professions of faith, and four had asked for baptism. Crain and the other ministers said that they had also spent much time in the Isolation Camp among trainees who were preparing soon to go overseas. Here the ministers and their aides had given out five or six thousand copies of "On the March with the Master." Two boys had been reclaimed. Seven or eight in the hospital had made professions of faith, and about twenty-three others followed during the week. Many of them expected to be baptized during their furloughs home.

In May, 1918, under Crain's inspiration two young soldiers received the call to the ministry and were ordained in a service at the First Baptist Church in Greenville; the pastor



of the Pendleton Street Baptist Church, B. D. Hahn, preached the ordination sermon. Dean Crain reported proudly that both these young men, Walter E. Rule of Sevierville, Tennessee, and John O. Hood of Seymour, Tennessee, came from "our Mountain Mission Schools."

The winter of 1918 brought bitter cold and a devastating epidemic of influenza long known to history as one of the scourges of our participation in the war. In those trying days Crain and his brother E. B. put up for one night in January a man from Sweetwater, Tennessee, who had come looking for his older son to verify the report that he was dead. The father, not finding the body and being heavy-hearted, tired, and cold, looked up Crain, about whom the son had written many times before his death. The next day the men found the boy's body in a morgue in Greenville. So fast were people dying of the flu that bodies were stacked one on top of the other several feet high until they could be buried.

All at Camp Sevier, however, was not heart-breaking. Crain wrote in his report to the *Courier* on January 7, 1918, that he had participated in a songfest with the boys who were snowed in at the camp. Crain played the banjo of one of the boys, and as he and another youth played such mountain tunes as "Nancy Rolling," "Jim Sutton," "Polly Thompson," and "O, My Little Gal How Do You Like Me?" all the others joined in the singing. Afterwards Crain "told a few jokes, and they laughed, and we all had a good time, even though it was snowing. Before we left I asked how many of them were Christians. No one spoke. After saying a few words concerning salvation, I asked all who believe in Jesus as the Savior of the world and also as their personal Savior to hold up their hands. Most of the hands went up. It was a great meeting."

In one of Crain's accounts of his work with the boys at Camp Sevier, in which he gave the details of a boy's conversion, Crain wrote: "Conscious of my own helplessness, but rejoicing in what my eyes have beheld of the power of God

in the hearts of these soldier boys, I know that what has been accomplished here at this one camp justified every dollar Baptists have raised for Home Missions in the last five years." The article was published in the *Courier* in April, 1918. Victor I. Masters, Superintendent of Publicity, Home Mission Board, Atlanta, Georgia, built upon this statement a fervent plea for greater gifts for the work in military camps. He reproduced twenty copies of the article and sent one out to every Baptist paper in the South. When Masters wrote Crain about his taking this liberty, he enclosed a copy and also asked for further narratives of this kind. "Blessings on you. You are doing a fine work," he concluded.

These busy ten years as missionary to the mountaineers, first as principal of North Greenville Academy and then as state evangelist and enlistment worker, came to an end in 1920. Crain had helped bring the educational and spiritual plight of the mountaineers to the attention of the Baptists. He had helped strengthen many schools and churches in the western part of the state by fund raising and preaching. He had come to know well the organizational agencies of the Baptists in his state and the South by working closely with many of them and by listening to reports at the conventions. He had come to be known throughout the area as a large, industrious man, sincere and zealous for service in his denomination, but ever ready for humor. He had gained valuable experience as minister at large. For the rest of his career he was to use this experience in serving the congregations of individual churches.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *City View and Park Street Pastorates: 1920-1931*

In 1920 while still state evangelist, Dean Crain had held a two-week revival in a small mission church in the City View district of Greenville. The mission had met in an upstairs room over Giles' Store, was composed of only a few members, and to support itself relied largely on aid from the State Mission Board. Inspired by the revival meeting, the mission officially organized itself into the City View Baptist Church and soon thereafter erected a simple frame building.

The charter members of City View, among them Arthur Agnew, had been so deeply moved by Crain's inspirational meeting and by his qualities of leadership that they had begun to press Dean Crain to be their pastor. They invited several ministers to preach trial sermons, but only Crain, Agnew and others felt, was dynamic enough to get the church started on a permanent basis. At first Crain was hesitant to leave his position with the State Mission Board. Not until he became fully aware of the threat to survival of the newly formed church by the aggressive evangelical community of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, popularly known as the Mormon Church, was he challenged to accept the call as pastor of City View Baptist Church. In July, 1920, he began his first full-time pastorate, \$1,200 of his salary still coming from the State Board.



The controversy between the Baptists and the Mormons had occasionally flared up in violent quarrels and intimidations among some of the more lawless and surly members of each group, and one night before Crain moved his family to City View, he was spending the night in the house of a church member who gave him a Smith and Weston "38" to take to bed. "It might come in handy," his host said. Crain politely refused to arm himself other than in the armor of Christ's righteousness. After a short time Crain found a place to live and moved his family to City View.

Most of the trouble between the Mormons and the Baptists grew out of Mormon teachings on polygamy, even though the practice was no longer lawful nor one of the basic creeds of the Mormon Church. The Mormons, nevertheless, resented the intrusion of a non-Mormon group telling them that their creeds were false, their inspiration spuriously unbiblical, and their practices abominable; the Baptists were equally resentful of the influence of these non-New Testament ideas and practices in their own homes and churches. Sharp words passed one day between Crain and a Mormon woman. Pointing her finger close to his nose, she accused him of interference. Crain retorted: "Don't touch that, lady; it's got fire in it." Never one to run from those who differed from him in beliefs and Christian concepts, Crain announced that on a certain night he was going to preach on "For the Mormons but Against Their System." They came and listened.

On two occasions the church had to deal within its own membership with cases of divorce, which, according to strict Baptist interpretation of Matthew 5:31-32, is polygamous and un-Christian. One case involved a man who entered the church and became choir leader without letting the church know that his former wife was still living. When his case became known, Crain went to Laurens County for the evidence and led the church to dismiss the man and his wife from membership. Another couple, the wife having been divorced, came to the

church professing repentance of sin, belief in Christ as Savior, and asking for baptism. The church took this couple in, but some members objected because they saw no difference in the two cases.

As time passed and it became clear that under Dean Crain's guidance the City View Baptist Church was going to flourish in spite of all obstacles, the Baptist-Mormon controversy simmered down. Both congregations learned to soft-pedal their differences and for the good of the district at large came to live in outer harmony. Later in his ministry at City View when the district was trying to get a grammar school established in the fast-growing community, some of the Mormons said, "If we ever get a school, that Crain man will have to do it." Thus had Crain not only put the little church safely through a major doctrinal crisis, but his zeal, his courage, and his community pride had even won him the respect of those who personally opposed him.

Meanwhile Crain was performing the less sensational duties of efficiently organizing the church and putting it on an independent financial basis. Assisting him was Miss Henrietta Wright, former Baptist missionary to India and now a State Mission Board worker assigned to City View. Tithing played a prominent role in the doctrines Crain preached, and he divided the board of deacons into committees with which he met regularly to discuss church problems and plan ways to strengthen weak places. He encouraged the treasurers of the several departments of the church to cooperate with the church treasurer by reporting all offerings. He organized an every-member canvass once a year. Soon he began to see results. A year after his arrival, he was able to take the church off the relief budget of the State Mission Board. Explaining his decision to Porter M. Bailes, his former pastor at Greer, he referred to the verse in Psalms that says "The gold is mine and the cattle on a thousand hills" and added, "I am going to find out how much of this gold belongs to God." From that time





The old home and the family: Shade, Dean, the Mother and Father, Minnie and Buford.



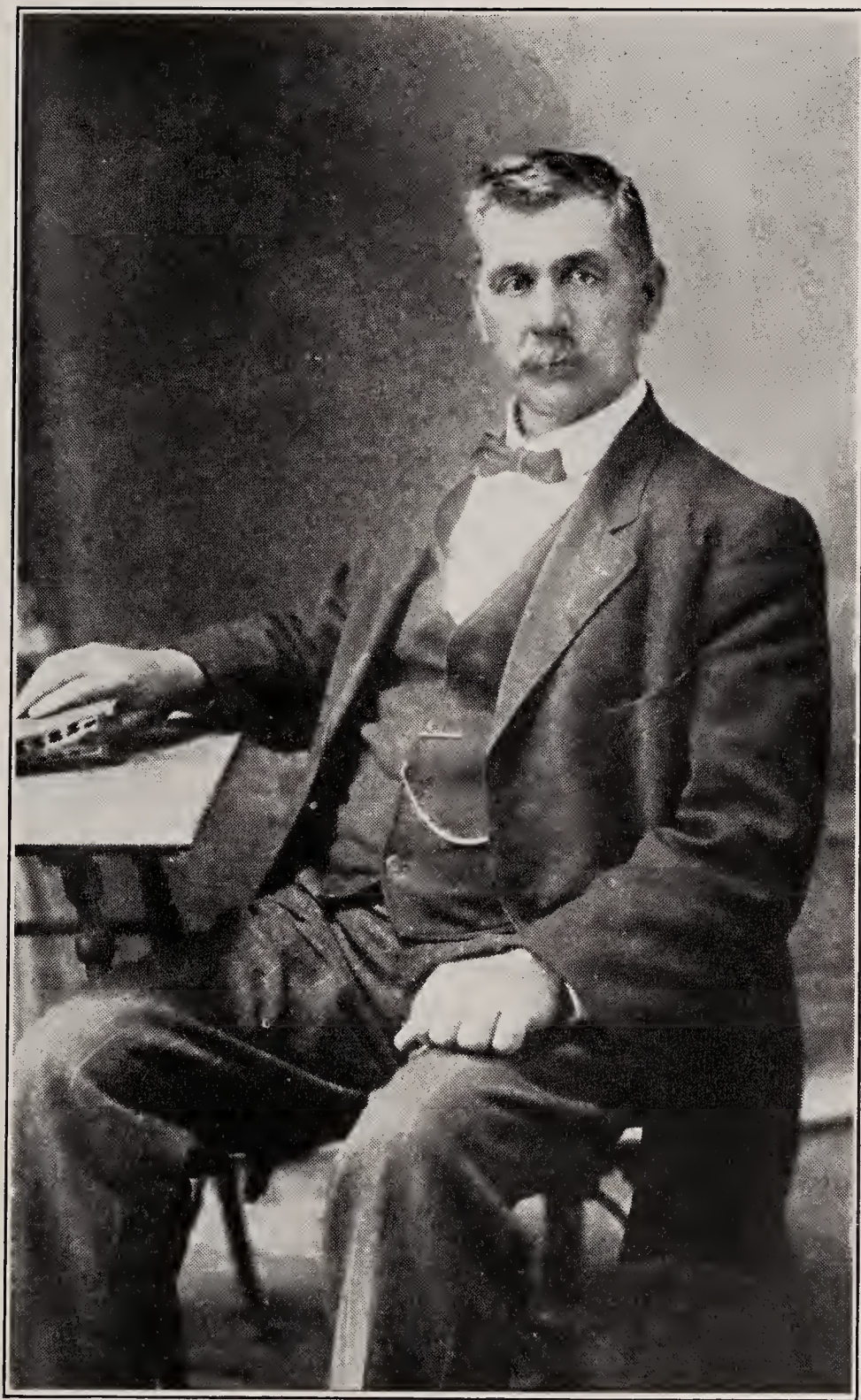
The Father and Mother by the home which Dean helped to build.





Buford and Dean at ages  
ten and fourteen.





Rev. R. B. Vaughan, who baptized  
J. Dean Crain, Mrs. J. Dean Crain and  
E. Buford Crain.





The Mother and Sister and the factory where Dean's first pair of pants was made.



J. Dean and E. Buford Crain.





Hog Back Mountain in the Dark Corner of Greenville County.



Glassy Rock, northwest of Dean's home.



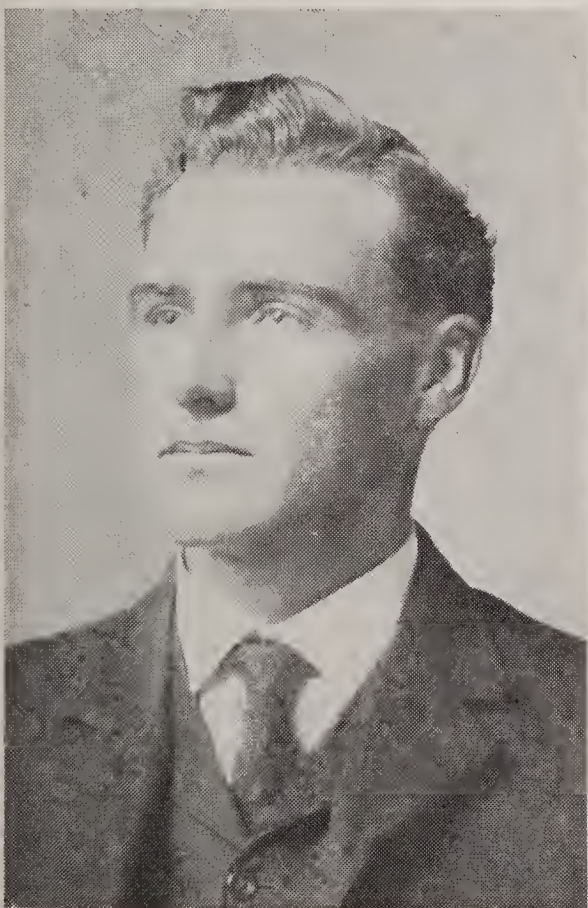


Dean, extreme left, as a student at North Greenville Academy.





Dean, back row, third from left, with Furman delegation to a student conference at Farm School, Black Mountain, N. C., 1907.



Dean as a student  
at Furman.



Speakers representing Furman literary societies, 1910. Left to right; standing, J. F. Lide, J. Dean Crain, Maxie Gregg White; seated, R. B. Curry, Gordon Poteat.



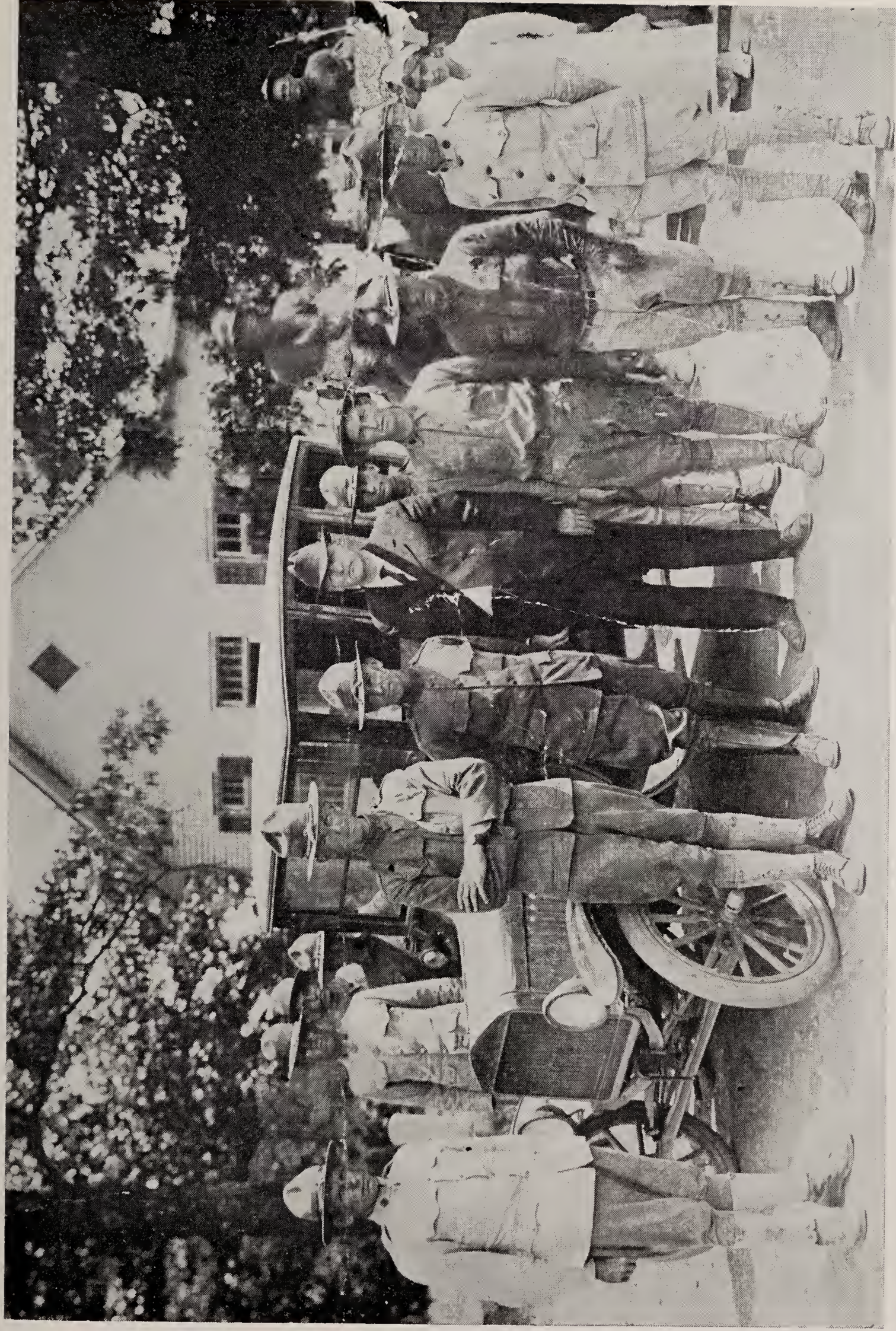


Mr. and Mrs. J. Dean Crain, August, 1908.



Mr. and Mrs. J. Dean Crain and son, James, 1912.





Dean, center, with a group at Camp Sevier during World War I.





James and Mary Ellen, 1919.



Dr. and Mrs. B. D. Hahn with the Crains.





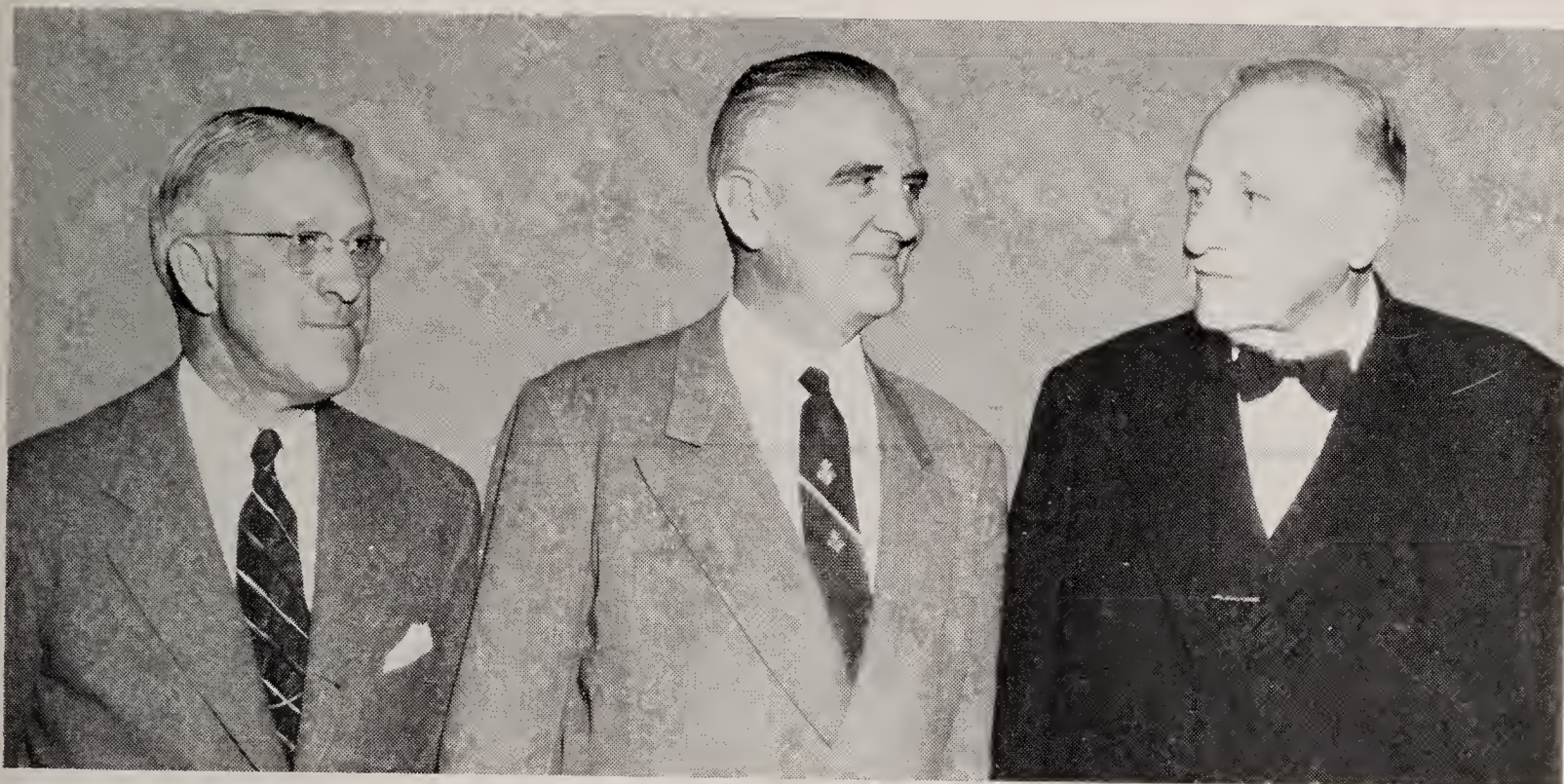
E. Buford and J. Dean Crain, 1937.





Mr. and Mrs. J. Dean Crain, 1941.





Alester G. Furman, Jr., John L. Plyler, and J. Dean Crain.



J. Dean Crain with the Sullivan Award, 1952.





J. Dean Crain in the pulpit of Pendleton  
Street Baptist Church.





Hiott

James F. Byrnes, J. Dean Crain, and Dwight D. Eisenhower,  
at Columbia, S. C., 1951.





J. Dean Crain, breaking ground for the new campus of  
Furman University, October, 1953.



of launching out on faith, with a small, poor membership, the church zealously met its heavy obligations and went on to prosper.

In April, 1922, Crain invited Bailes to lead his church in a revival meeting. With Bailes preaching and the "man with a golden harp," J. A. Brown of Dallas, Texas, leading the singing, this meeting turned out to be one of the most successful of Crain's entire ministry. "We felt the presence of God in every service," Bailes recalled years later, "and we found the reach of the services was city-wide and down deep into the hearts of men, boys, and girls. Its reach brought in some very hardened sinners, men who have become the pillars and the leaders and the strong forces of this good church." Up to Sunday, April 30, after a week of services, fifty new members had been received into the church, according to a report in *The Baptist Courier* for May 11; but the final figure, which was greater, was not reported and cannot be located.

Here, as elsewhere in his ministry, Crain realized the importance of being attentive to details and to the comforting personal touch in pastoral relationships. Mrs. Arthur Agnew has preserved one of his remarks on this subject. "Once in visiting the home of one of his members, a poker would not stay in place on a tiled hearth. After several fruitless attempts to keep it in place, he said, 'That is an example of the effect of small things on our lives; most of us can stand up to principles, but it is the aggravating little things that get us down'." Mrs. Agnew has also recalled that when Crain once visited a very sick child he prayed that "if the life of the child would glorify God, let him live; if not, take him now." At the baptism of a young boy, Crain said he felt that God had a purpose in the life of this lad and that he expected God to use him. This boy grew up to be a chaplain in the navy.

While pastor at City View, Crain continued to participate actively in the wider program of his denomination. At the State Baptist Convention, which met at the First Baptist



Church in Greenville, November, 1921, he delivered the Convention Sermon. He chose I Corinthians 12:31 as his text, and Porter M. Bailes, beloved friend and former pastor, read the scripture at his invitation. When the Convention met in Rock Hill in 1922, he again attended, and on "request of the president" he "responded for the Convention" to the welcome address given on behalf of the mayor of the town by F. W. Gregg, pastor of the Presbyterian Church. In May of the same year, he had attended the Southern Baptist Convention in Jacksonville, Florida.

As the train "rolled into Columbia" on the return trip home, Crain had a strange feeling that he would some day be laboring for Christ in that city. No one had yet spoken to him about going there, nor had he made any move in that direction. But at home the feeling persisted, and never one to ignore premonitions if they seemed of divine origin, he visited David Ramsay, President of Greenville College for Women, to ask him about the peculiarities of Baptist work in Columbia. One Sunday soon afterwards, two men from Columbia Second Baptist Church came to City View to hear him preach. They introduced themselves after the service and discussed his coming as their pastor. Since he was to be gone all the following week preaching a revival meeting at Morgan Memorial Church, he told Mrs. Crain as he left the house that he might get a telegram from Columbia Second Baptist Church and advised her what to do if it should come.

The call came, and Crain decided to accept it. When he told the City View congregation of his decision, they "were loathe to let him go." Miss Wright, dedicated church worker and personal friend and adviser, said to tell the people in Columbia "what Nehemiah said, 'I am too busy to come down'." She tried to persuade him that his work at City View was not finished, that he had just "laid his hoe down in the middle of the row." Other friends, however, like E. Inman, felt that the Lord was calling Crain to move on and advised



him to go. Crain responded humbly to Inman's great confidence in him by saying, "Well, the Lord spoke through a jackass once, and he may be doing it again."

Crain left City View not because he regarded the work done, but because the difficult days of challenge were over. He had led the frail craft through its early doctrinal, organizational, and financial crises, and now that it was sailing on relatively calm waters, Crain felt that he was no longer needed at the helm.

Meanwhile his reputation as fund raiser, organizer, and promoter, first as state evangelist and then as pastor at City View, had attracted the attention of the deacons at Columbia Second Baptist Church, which changed its name in 1926 to Park Street Baptist Church. And this church gave Crain a new challenge. He was inaugurated on Sunday, September 3, 1922. E. C. Gayle reported in the *Courier* the welcome service. Lt. Governor-Elect Jackson, who went to school with Dean Crain, made a short talk. O. L. Jones spoke on behalf of the Baptist preachers in the city, a Mr. Thompson for the General Board, C. A. Jones for the Baptist schools, and C. E. Burts, with whom Crain was to be associated in the work of the Christian Temperance Union during the 1920's, for the campaign and enlistment program. W. T. Derieux and Jess Hammond, supply pastor of the church, spoke on behalf of all Baptists. The majority of the Baptist preachers of the city were present. "Brother Crain responded in a very able manner in his unique way," Gayle concluded his report.

The challenge at City View had been largely pioneering; the challenge at Park Street was to be largely expansion. The membership had reached 585 and was still growing, but the church was in debt and needed more space. In addition to an auditorium, it had only a four-classroom building. Immediately Crain set to work. In a short time the church added to its property by buying an adjoining lot for \$8,000 and made plans to build a Sunday School building at a cost of \$35,000.



To finance this building program, Crain proposed the adoption of a system of finances which, according to E. C. Davis, Church Treasurer, not only put the church in a position to meet new debts as they came due but helped pay off old debts as well. Crain inspired the church members to support his administration. When Davis was first elected treasurer, he says, he went to pay a current utility bill and met a bewildered cashier, who asked if he really meant to pay the bill then. When assured that he did and that the check was good, she remarked that she usually had to send a second bill and sometimes had to threaten to cut off the power. This confidence challenged the new treasurer to back his pastor's financial program.

According to Mrs. W. L. Smoak, Church Secretary, Crain's pulpit enthusiasm always brought in large offerings. "It was amusing to hear him make up money for a worthy cause. He would say: 'Who will give \$100.00, \$75.00, \$50.00, or \$25.00,' and then after each hand was held up for an amount, he would say, 'Certainly, certainly,' as if he really expected that person to give that amount. He inspired the donation of many big offerings for Park Street Church . . . when the need arose for more than we had on hand or even was in sight."

Spiritual expansion was no less important. In this work too Crain exerted his energies and his talents for leadership. He brought in strong inspirational preachers and lay workers for special meetings and study campaigns. In a revival meeting held in November, 1926, in which L. H. Wolfe of Muscogee, Oklahoma, preached, and Charles O. Miller led the singing, there were seventy additions to the church. "The Lord has greatly blessed our work since Brother Crain has been with us," wrote the church reporter in the *Courier*. Membership by then had risen to nearly 1,000.

One of the great spiritual joys of the years at Park Street was the personal one of baptizing his brother Shade who had joined the church at Ebenezer-Welcome after one of Buford's

sermons but wanted his other brother to baptize him. For twenty years Dean and Buford had labored for Shade's conversion. Now one Monday as Dean looked out his study window, he saw a tall, handsome man in a big panama hat coming to his door with a suitcase. It was Shade, who had never made Dean a visit before, and Dean was puzzled. "I've come to get you to baptize me," Shade said, "and I've got to get back home tomorrow."

Dean hurriedly called together his deacons, who passed on Shade's request and arranged for the ordinance to be observed that night. Buford, who had been in a meeting in the lower part of the state, came by Columbia on the way home to spend the night with Dean and see Shade baptized. While the deacons and Buford stood by, Dean baptized Shade. As the brothers went down into the water, Dean noticed that Shade had his pocketbook in his pocket. "Hand it to one of the deacons." Shade looked up hesitantly, then said in a natural tone, "Well, we will just get it, too. I want to do this thing up right."

Throughout his ministry at Park Street, Crain enjoyed a warm fellowship with his church members. He held the deacons' monthly meetings in his home, and when the serious business was dispensed with, the twelve deacons laughed at his "good humor and jokes" while partaking of refreshments served by Mrs. Crain. It was said by some of the members that "the deacons loved the ground Mr. Crain walked on." But the Crains loved the church members as much as the members loved them. Often Crain fished with some of them or participated with them in other forms of recreation. E. C. Davis has recalled an experience on one of these fishing trips at Myrtle Beach on which they had great fun. Yet Crain never let fun degenerate into blasphemy. In the dim light of dawn on this Myrtle Beach trip, Crain and Davis could see some other fishermen nearby who had been seining and were working on their net. The sharks had cut it, and as they



repaired it, they talked loudly and abusively. Crain spoke, addressing several remarks and questions to them, some of which they answered, but all the time continuing with work, "a-spitting and a-cussing." Finally, Crain, who would at that time never have been taken for a preacher in his outlandish "get-up" of overcoat and hat over a bathing suit, asked the leader of the group, "What church do you belong to?" Somewhat startled by the question, the man rolled his chew of tobacco from one side to the other two or three times before announcing sacrilegiously, "I belong to that big church, the invisible church." Crain solemnly replied, "Yes, I know your pastor. He gives me a lot of trouble with my congregation."

Inspiring the growth of Park Street and sharing in the church fellowship kept Crain busy, but neither here nor elsewhere did he fail to find time to participate in the wider program of the Southern Baptists or in the activities of the civic community. In 1923 his church sent him to Stockholm, Sweden, to attend the meeting of the Baptist World Alliance. In the same year on December 5 he was made a trustee of Furman University. In 1924 he went as a messenger from his church to the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. At that meeting the Seventy-Five Million Dollar Campaign had just ended and had been over-subscribed. Even though the money had not yet been received, nearly two hours of debating took place on what to do with the "overage." Finally, Crain got the floor and said: "I once knew a nurse in a state hospital who had one hundred male mental patients under her care. Someone asked her if she were afraid the men would harm her, and she replied, 'No! They don't know enough to get together!'" His point was well taken, and the story has since become one of the most famous of his career.

In December, 1926, he was elected president of the South Carolina State Baptist Convention in recognition of his fifteen years of dedicated service. In this office he served three consecutive terms, 1927, 1928, and 1929, planning, appointing



committees, and presiding over the conventions. The chief issues of his tenure concerned money, policies for the educational institutions, and a controversy over the teaching of the Bible in the public schools. During his first term the convention met at his own church. In his address, "The Glorious Task before Baptists Today," he stated that the need for world-wide salvation was never greater and that the Baptists must gird themselves for the battle; they must have faith, he said, and they must support their unified budget. "We have one recommendation to make," he concluded, "namely, that this Convention put on a money-raising, debt-paying campaign" in 1928. The committee appointed to look into the feasibility of such a campaign, however, disapproved of the idea. Z. T. Cody, spokesman, recommended that the plan be delayed at least a year and urged the Convention to support the Cooperative Program. Crain's first proposal was thus turned down.

During the same meeting W. Y. Henderson read a resolution adopted by the North Greenville Association asking the group to direct the trustees of Furman University to abolish all Greek letter fraternities which had recently been established at Furman. The resolution was hotly debated. Its opponents, of whom Dean Crain seems to have been one, proposed a counter motion to refer the matter to the trustees to be handled at their discretion; but the motion lost 106 to 142, and the convention adopted Henderson's resolution by a strong plurality, 171 to 85. The president was again on the losing side.

In the midst of this heated debate over prohibition of fraternities, word came to the president's chair that doughnuts and hot coffee were ready downstairs, whereupon President Crain made the announcement. "Buford, who was sitting near the front on his backbone," as Crain put it in telling the incident later, "raised up and asked, 'Are there any hotdogs?'" Dean quipped, "No, they are all up here." For the most part,



however, Crain filled this post during his three-year incumbency with a stern yet relaxed dignity, using humor as occasion permitted.

On the same day that debate over fraternities took place, Professor A. T. Pickens, who had been dismissed from Furman University the preceding year, read a paper of his relations to Furman and demanded that the Convention prefer specific charges against him so that he could reply and defend his character. Several delegates, including Dr. D. M. Ramsay, President of Greenville Woman's College, protested that Pickens was out of order. On the motion of H. A. Bagley, the Convention refused to hear the dismissed professor's further statement of grievance.

Perhaps the most outstanding issue of the convention of 1927 was whether to support a movement in the state to teach the Bible in the public schools. Crain himself served on a committee to consider this matter and read the committee report to the assembly. Much discussion followed the reading, but most of the comments turned upon clarification of the report. At least twice, members called Crain to reread the report before finally voting to turn it back to the committee for more clear and precise wording.

In 1928 Crain presented the revised report of the Committee on "Separation of Church and State," and this time the Convention adopted the report. Essentially the report argued that the Bible "when properly read and studied is an act of worship which can not rightfully be carried on by the arm of the State. The State's business is to protect not promote religious matters." The report argued that the teaching of religious truth should be left to the church, the home, and the denominational schools and colleges and urged the state to forbid the teaching of "the Bible as a text book in any school or institution in South Carolina supported by taxation as a whole or in part." The report is a clear and dignified presentation, in the tradition of Roger Williams, of the arguments for

religious freedom and the complete separation of church and state. Dean Crain was proud that he had been a member of the committee which drew up this report. He considered his work on this committee and his support of Furman the two major achievements of his three-year service as president of the South Carolina State Baptist Convention.

In the President's Address before the Convention in 1928, Crain urged state Baptists to have a spiritual revival within before they could qualify as world missionaries. He concluded this message with a less specific recommendation than the one with which he ended his first message. He proposed that every Baptist rededicate himself, that everyone support the work of the denomination with "prayers, time and money, thereby beginning a revival in the Stewardship of Life to end when Jesus comes."

Crain's address in 1929 was an impassioned plea for unity and cooperation behind a sacrificial leadership. In contrast to the two preceding meetings, however, this one was characterized by hearing of routine reports and the disposing of routine business. Crain thus ended his third term as president in a meeting of relative calm and was able to return to his local duties with a feeling that he had served his denomination, if not with greatness, at least with moderate success in bringing about the harmony for which he had pled in his last president's address.

All this time he had not neglected his responsibilities to the civic community in Columbia. Early in his residence in Columbia he had accepted an appointment by Malcolm Scarborough, Superintendent of the State Penitentiary, as chaplain of the institution, and he held this office during his entire stay at Park Street Church. Every Sunday morning before his regular church services he held services at the penitentiary. Often he took other ministers and let them speak. One time he took John Lake, Southern Baptist missionary to the lepers in China, who spoke, and when Lake had finished, the prison-



ers took up an offering of about thirty dollars for the leper hospital in China.

Crain never failed to respond, day or night, to requests from the prisoners, especially from those in the death house. During his term of service, he "went to the death house and read, talked, and prayed," he said, "with eighteen men, and only one of them went out rebellious and unrepentant." The night before he was to spend the final moments for the first time with a condemned man, he could not sleep. The electrocution was scheduled for six o'clock in the morning. Long before then, the Crains rose and prayed together for the man soon to die. The emotional shock of the experience — the realization that a sinner was to go forcibly to his Maker with his spiritual wounds still unhealed — never lost its sharpness in Crain's heart. Many of his hearers in later years were to recoil from the shock of these things also; they could see the condemned man, could shudder at the thought of standing by one who was to step directly into eternity, could weep with the loved ones, could come near to fainting with the faint-hearted, could almost see the convulsive action of muscles as the great charge of electric current surged through the body, and could almost smell the stench of burning human flesh. All a picture of the results of sin! Crain was to draw upon these experiences in many sermons hereafter.

Once a man died in the prison; and since nobody claimed his body, he was buried at Tickleberry, the potter's field. Only the guards, the undertaker, Chaplain Crain, son Jimmie, and Nelson Holtzclaw were present. When the attendants started to lower the box into the grave, the spectators, among them Dean Crain, could see the body, which had not been embalmed, swelling and bursting through the seams of the box. They could also see that the body was turned face down. Crain read the scriptures and prayed, while in his heart he wept over this unwanted sinner whom the devil had claimed.

"Sin is worse than we think it is — it is a terrible thing,"



he said once in speaking of these prisoners. "I never found a dozen men who had heard their fathers pray." And most of the prisoners would never admit that they had sinned.

On February 11, 1926, Dean Crain reported to the *Baptist Courier* on his work as chaplain. Under the title "To the Baptists on the Outside," he gave statistics on the literacy and church affiliation of the prison inmates and closed with characteristic humor: "The Baptists are in a majority . . . but I am not certain that all are here from the other denominations that ought to be . . . pray for us that next year we do better. Shamefully submitted, J. Dean Crain, Chaplain."

During his stay in Columbia he also served on the Board of Visitors of the state asylum. Richard I. Manning, Governor of the State, had heard him speak to the South Carolina Press Association at Chick Springs on "The Power of Pulpit and Press" and, taking a liking to him, had appointed him to this position. Crain met the Board every month of his three-year service. The chief matter accomplished during his tenure was a recommendation to the Governor and the Legislature that the home for handicapped children be built at Clinton. Whitten Village is the result. Among a group of Columbia preachers, Crain once met with the Town Council to discuss the problem of "pool rooms." The Council suggested that nobody under sixteen years of age should be allowed in. Crain took the stand that "if it is not fit for a boy, it is not fit for his daddy."

By 1930 Crain's denominational achievements as evangelist, minister, chaplain, author of a portion of his life, contributor to the *Courier*, zealous attender of conventions, committee worker on many Southern Baptist Committees, former president of the South Carolina State Baptist Convention, and trustee of Furman University — these achievements had given Dean Crain a large stature in the state. Furman University recognized this work in June of this year and conferred on him an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. This increased



stature attracted several churches to consider Dr. Crain as their pastor. For some time he remained despondent because he could not be sure of what move to make. In the midst of his indecision Pendleton Street Baptist Church in Greenville, under the pastorate of B. D. Hahn, invited him to conduct a revival meeting, and Dr. Crain accepted.

He preached in his usual blunt-speaking manner and included some sermons on "hell and damnation." He was surprised, therefore, when the church members called him to succeed their retiring pastor, the beloved B. D. Hahn, who was more scholarly and more suave than he. When the call came from Pendleton Street, Dr. Crain felt sure that God was guiding him. He resigned from Park Street, effective December, 1931. He left the church with a membership of about 1200 and in a financial condition that enabled the members to keep their bills paid and go right on through the depression in the black.

The news of Crain's resignation brought a highly complimentary editorial from one of the Columbia newspapers. Crain's departure, the editorial said, "will bring joy to some — those that do not like plain-spoken words by a strong-minded, blunt-speaking man. It was the same way in the days of Elijah and Jeremiah and other prophets of old. Not that Dr. Crain may be put in their class, but he has learned of them to fear God more than man, and to be outspoken in his interpretation of Divine will. Maybe sometimes Dr. Crain missed the true interpretation, but his plain speaking had a stimulating effect which made men examine themselves and be less daring in their affronteries. The best wishes of all good people go with Dr. Crain." Thus had Dean Crain left his mark on Columbia. And now after eight years away from his native region, he returned, widely known and respected as a fearless man of God, as pastor of the second largest church in Greenville.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Pastor of Pendleton Street Church: 1931-1952*

J. Dean Crain began his pastoral duties at Pendleton Street Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, on January 1, 1931. The church had a membership of 760, a Sunday School enrollment of 838, a Training Union enrollment of 65, and a Woman's Missionary Union total of 302. Although he did not know it at the time, Dean Crain was soon to learn that the church had a debt of \$41,471.32. As soon as he knew of this debt, his first major efforts were to try to put the church on a sounder financial basis. It was not an easy assignment. The nation was in its most critical depression, and money was as scarce in Greenville as elsewhere.

As he had successfully done at Park Street, Dean Crain first coordinated all donations to the church through the church treasurer. He stressed the need for full authorization of all spending, he urged the payment of new debts as they were incurred, and he insisted upon accurately recording all expenditures. He proposed changes in the constitution and by-laws to carry out this program and to encourage more local members to contribute their talents. Principles of economy were not Crain's sole argument for these changes. He believed that the people of the church were better off spiritually if they administered their own church organization rather than if they relied on professional workers. Service by talented



but untrained members might not always result in excellent achievement; but only through individual service, did he feel, could Christians grow in spirit and reap the blessings of their faith.

In accord with his own constant stress upon church economy, Crain refused during these critical early years to accept proposed raises in his own salary. He showed not only a willingness to "practice what he preached," but combined personal economy with benevolence. On one occasion at the business meeting of the deacons, the topic arose of shutting off the promised retirement annuity to B. D. Hahn, "pastor emeritus." Dr. Crain quickly said, "Dr. Hahn is old and you promised to keep him up; you can not do that. Cut mine, and leave the 'old patriarch's' alone." When Hahn heard this exchange, he was cheered to know that his successor held such a principle. Mrs. Hahn has said that this act of benevolence saved Dr. Hahn's life for seven years.

At another deacons' meeting at which first one and then another plan to raise funds was discussed and then discouragingly laid aside, Dr. Crain finally proposed that the deacons reduce his salary by \$500.00. After some show of astonishment and some hesitant reminders that his salary was already too small for the service he rendered, the deacons accepted the offer. As Crain stepped into a side room to get his coat and hat after the meeting, he heard one of the deacons say on his way out, "Now we are getting somewhere." In an aside to Joe Keith, Crain said, "Yes, I feel it."

Crain's policies gradually brought results, but the path wound ruggedly uphill all the way. Not only were times bad, but within the membership he had to overcome strong opposition to his methods. He was never able to gain the full cooperation of several small groups on money matters. Yet despite difficulties and opposition he managed to lead the church out of the red. Mr. J. B. Johns, who became church treasurer in 1945, reports that Crain was "a genius at handling



the finances of his church. He treated as sacred the funds contributed by church members. He felt personally responsible for their use, and he consented to no expenditure until he was satisfied it was a wise one. . . . He disliked church debt and labored to keep the business of the church on a sound business basis. God, he said, is never slack in meeting his obligations."

Finally after ten years of cooperative planning with his deacons, Crain joyfully announced in 1942 that the church was out of debt and that in 1942 alone church contributions totaled \$42,507.19. In his message "Out of Debt" he reminded the church, however, that "Progress is the activity of today and the guarantee of tomorrow." And he challenged the church to "Let no success cool our zeal or slacken the traces in carrying on the redemptive work assigned us by our Savior."

The challenge was appropriate. Pendleton Street could not rest on its debt-free laurels. Under Crain's leadership the membership had reached 1,892, more than twice the 1931 figure, and by August 31, 1946, according to *The Greenville News* for that date, it was the largest church in Greenville with 2,100 members. Physical capacity was far from adequate. Old houses near the church were temporarily put into use to accommodate an overflow of 500 from the total Sunday School enrollment. Already one new building had been built, the Hahn Building. And in 1946 Crain led the church to adopt a plan for a long-range building program which called for \$150,000.00 and which would require five or ten years to complete. A fund of \$40,000.00 had already been collected by setting aside the offering on every fifth Sunday in the quarter as Building Fund Day. Dean Crain lived to see the completion of the education building and, though in retirement, preached the dedication sermon. William A. Harrell, a Sunday School Board architect who helped plan the building, praised Dr. Crain's vision and judgment in insisting



upon adequate room space for all ages. Harrell said, "He was one of the strongest supporters of the right kind of a Sunday School and Training Union Program that it was ever my privilege to know."

The phenomenal growth in church membership during these years was not automatic but was in great measure the direct consequence of the leadership and magnetic influence of J. Dean Crain. As at City View and Park Street churches, he continued the vigorous evangelical ministry for which he had now come to be noted. In addition to his own forthright preaching each week, he planned annual revival meetings and brought some of the strongest men in the Southern Baptist Convention to assist him. He invited outstanding speakers for special meetings, for Sunday School enlargement campaigns, and for Training Union weeks of study. Among the many servants of God who enriched and blessed the people of Pendleton Street Baptist Church by their preaching, teaching, and singing, the following deserve special mention: Perry Carter, Luther J. Holcombe, Vernon Yearby, W. F. Powell, E. B. Crain, George Ragland, John F. Vines, J. B. Lawrence, Paul Caudill, J. O. Williams, R. C. Campbell, A. T. Patterson, and B. B. McKinney.

Two revival meetings clearly stand out for their significant spiritual results. In the mid-1930's Dr. M. E. Dodd led a meeting which moved one hundred persons to unite with the church. And in the fall of 1950, Dr. C. E. Matthews, led a meeting which brought 101 new members, sixty-three of them by baptism. On Sunday evening, October 15, 1950, Dean Crain baptized sixty-two of these converts as well as six others who had previously committed themselves to Christ. The immersion at this one service of sixty-eight believers was the largest number that he ever baptized at one time, and it is likely that few ministers in the state have been blessed by God with this record of service. One of these converts was an aged man past seventy who had been confined to his home

with an illness which brought his death soon thereafter. When visited by Crain and Matthews, the aged and dying man, Mr. Wright, wept as much in happiness over the security of soul that his conversion had brought him as in sorrow over the thought of wasted years without God.

The influence of Pendleton Street Baptist Church and of the ministry of Dean Crain was not limited after September, 1940, to the members who attended church. In that year Radio Station WMRC opened, and its owner, R. A. Jolly, donated time on its Sunday schedule to the Pendleton Street morning worship hour. Jolly, who had come to Greenville in 1925, six years before Crain came, explained his generous act of courtesy as the outgrowth of a close friendship with Dean Crain and of his "personal regard for him." Crain soon attracted a large radio audience which included his own shut-in members. As long as Crain was pastor, Station WMRC continued to broadcast his Sunday morning service.

As pastor, as well as church administrator, Crain in his Pendleton Street tenure faced his greatest challenge and achieved his greatest fulfillment. Never before had he had so many church members to whom he was spiritual guide and comfort. And never before had he been so close to his members, comforting them and being inspired in turn. He was first of all a spiritual physician. When Mrs. H. H. Snuggs reported that her nine-year-old daughter Margaret Anne wanted to give her heart to Christ, Crain and W. F. Powell went immediately to talk to Margaret Anne, whose answers to their questions satisfied them that she understood what it meant to be a Christian. Roy O. Davis gives Dean Crain the credit for helping him overcome a mental and spiritual illness which was destroying his whole life. In 1941, Davis says, after he had consulted several doctors and three psychiatrists but had not received much help from them, he finally went to talk to Dr. Crain. A nominal Christian with his name on the church roll, Davis realized after this consultation that he was disturb-



ed because he was not "right with the Lord." Advised to attend Sunday School, Church, and Training Union regularly, Davis followed this advice, and his troubles seemed to vanish. Crain warned him, however, against letting his gratitude to God and his new-found zeal make a fanatic out of him. By kind encouragement and advice, Dean Crain thus helped the former doctor's patient stay close to God and find peace of mind and spiritual happiness. Roy Davis later became chairman of the Board of Deacons of Pendleton Street Church.

Never, according to testimonials, did Crain fail as pastor to respond to requests for help, unless providentially hindered, and he frequently spent long hours visiting the sick and praying in their homes. Mrs. J. T. Cox says that "A few days after I had undergone a major operation Dr. Crain came to the hospital to see me. He pressed my hand in his as he greeted me, but when I attempted to speak he said, 'Mrs. Cox, you just remain quiet and let me do the talking this time. I just came here to tell you that I have prayed this thing through and got an answer. You're going to be all right. It'll take a little time and relaxation on your part and the Lord is going to do the rest.' He spoke with such finality that he left me reassured, strengthened in faith, and realizing more than ever that God answers prayer."

During the extended illness of one church member, Crain often visited the patient and his wife, and by his prayers brought God's presence into the room. Just as the man was due for release from the hospital, a sudden turn for the worse occurred, and again Crain came as he had come before. He stood with his face to the window for a long time before turning to the wife. Pressing her hand in his, he said simply but from a deep well of sympathy, "I am so sorry." Unspeakable love and concern appeared in his eyes as he had to acknowledge that the Lord was saying "No" to their prayers.

Crain spent just as many more hours in his own home praying for his congregation. At his family altar each morning

before breakfast, he named the people who had need of God's help. When Ronnie Cox came down with bulbar-polio and for nearly twenty-four hours seemed on the brink of death, Crain at two o'clock in the morning could not sleep and called Mrs. Crain to join him in prayer for Ronnie. "Somehow," he told her, "I just feel that he needs our prayers now." Later when Mrs. Cox learned of this vigil, she realized that it had taken place at the same time that Ronnie had begun a turn toward successful recovery.

These and other testimonials to Crain's personal warmth and willingness to serve the members of his large congregation are not unique. The pastoral charge is faithfully carried out each week by scores of ministers in cities and villages all over Christendom. But Pendleton Street was a big church by Greenville standards, and Crain's responsibilities as administrator, minister, and civic servant took much of his time. It is therefore important to observe that Crain did not shirk his pastoral obligations but continued in the midst of manifold duties to fill the humble role of shepherd to his flock. Mrs. H. H. Snuggs has praised him highly, not only for his insight into the heart of personal troubles and for being "able to get down under your problem and help you solve it," but also for taking the time to exercise this God-given talent. And Mrs. W. L. Smoak has also paid him high tribute for heeding the "many extra calls upon his time and influence," some of which, "like keeping many homes from going on the 'rocks' by his wise counsel," were in the direct line of his duties but of which just as many were outside his normal sphere, like finding "jobs for men who were out of work during the depression."

As his church members came to benefit spiritually by his pastoral leadership, Crain too derived inspiration and strength from some of them. The Christian life and witness of J. Parker Edens especially inspired him. In 1941 Edens, a young graduate of Furman University who possessed a likeable person-



ality and a capable mind, succumbed to a crippling form of arthritis which blinded him and made him a complete invalid. Yet through all his adversities, Edens maintained a simple and wholesome faith in God. Crain often thought about Edens' condition, and many times he was heard to say that when he was discouraged and despondent, a visit to "Parker" — as Edens was fondly called by hundreds of Christian friends — would restore his faith; for he constantly marveled at Parker's Job-like endurance and often compared himself unfavorably: "I can not take pain very well. When any little thing gets wrong with me and I begin to hurt, I pray. I tell the Lord that I just can not take that." Thus frequently Crain found time in his busy life to visit Parker, and when away from home he would write about his trips. Many times he mentioned Parker in his radio sermons, and every time a visiting minister came to his church Dr. Crain took him out to see Parker Edens. Parker, too, thought highly of Crain: "Dr. Crain did more to enlighten me in the gospel than any other person. He had a way of saying a lot in a few words. When the Lord made Dean Crain, He threw away the pattern. I missed very few Sundays hearing Dr. Crain over the radio from the time he started on the air until he retired. I enjoyed the way he would say 'all up and down the line.' "

All, of course, was not perfectly harmonious. Dean Crain antagonized some members by his directness. His ideas were not always to the liking of others who refused to give full support. And on occasion he could be tactless and brutally frank in speaking his convictions, instances of which will come in a later chapter on his beliefs and expression. But throughout all the minor disagreements and even enmities, his opponents respected his leadership, and he in turn remembered his opponents in his prayers. The church thrived in the brisk atmosphere of Crain's strong personality.

During the two strenuous decades as pastor at Pendleton Street, in which he brought the church out of debt, enlarged

its membership and physical plant, and served as spiritual guide to a large membership, he did not neglect the wider operations of the Baptist denomination, either in his state or in the South. He continued to attend meetings of the South Carolina Convention and perform routine committee duties. He gave much of his time and energy to aiding other churches and pastors. He helped pastors with their personal problems. He counseled deacons or special committees from other churches with their pastor-congregation relations. He helped organize new churches, among them Augusta Heights Baptist Church, where, according to Herbert Johnson, writing in *The Greenville News* for December 20, 1953, "he spoke in connection with the organization." He performed a great service to his state by helping young ministers locate in their first pastorates or make appropriate changes. One young minister wrote in 1931: "May I state that I am truly and deeply grateful to you for all you did in getting me located. God has been good to give me friends like you."

On June 8, 1932, at the Southern Baptist Convention which met in St. Petersburg, Florida, Crain was elected a member of the Sunday School Board — one of the several most important denominational positions he held in his career. During his eighteen years of membership, which ended in 1949, he served on the Committee on Budgets for the Board, the Printing Contract Committee of the Board, and the Ridgecrest Committee, of which he served for a while as chairman. T. L. Holcombe, Executive Secretary of the Sunday School Board during the years of Crain's membership, praised Crain for his service: "He was big of brain and body, but better still he had a heart filled with the love of God that encompassed the world. During his long ministry as a member of the Sunday School Board, he always urged that we be sound in doctrine but aggressive in our program."

In 1942 Dean Crain received one of his highest honors. He was elected vice-president of the Southern Baptist Con-



vention. Pat M. Neff of Texas, President of Baylor University, was elected president. E. D. Solomon, editor-manager of the Florida State Baptist paper and one of Crain's close Convention co-workers, immediately wrote Neff a letter complimenting him on having such an able assistant: "You have an excellent helper in your first vice-president. Dr. J. Dean Crain is a great pastor, a wise leader, a good parliamentarian and is interested and informed in all denominational affairs. . . . Dr. Crain can adequately and ably represent you in the East. He, however, should be introduced to the West. He is a mighty man of God. He has been president of the South Carolina Convention. I am happy you have this able helper." To Crain's copy Solomon attached a jocular note: "I am surely happy about your election. We will always appreciate what you did for us at Richmond. Some of these days I am coming up to see you. Your church needs a good sermon once in a while — a Solomonic one — blessings on you."

A major issue in the Southern Baptist Convention in 1942 was one which Crain had dealt with as president of the South Carolina Baptist Convention in 1927 and 1928. Southern Baptist objections to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's sending Myron Taylor as a diplomatic representative to the Vatican reached their height this year in the adoption of a resolution of protest reaffirming "religious liberty and complete separation of Church and State." No doubt, Crain's prior work on this issue was a factor in securing him the vice-presidency in the year this controversy reached the floor.

In 1946 Dean Crain was one of six nominees for the presidency of the Convention. His former classmate at Furman University, Porter M. Bailes, nominated him, but Louie Newton of Georgia was elected over R. G. Lee on the second ballot after Crain and four other candidates had been eliminated on the first ballot. The choice of Newton over the other nominees followed the usual custom of elevating the vice-president to the presidency. Newton had just completed a

two-year term in this lower post. He was also from a more populous state than Crain's native state and had a larger Convention following. Dean Crain, on the other hand, had acted as vice-president four years earlier during a war year — 1942 — in which the Convention had not met; and for some strange reason — possibly sickness — he had not attended in 1944 when Newton succeeded him as vice-president. In 1946, therefore, the Convention did not have any knowledge of Crain's executive experience. And apparently Crain himself did not publicly seek this office. He thus failed of achieving the highest office among Southern Baptists for a number of reasons — some of them circumstantial. But there is no sign among his correspondence of disappointment; the episode, in fact, is not even mentioned in his papers. He was apparently busy enough as pastor of Pendleton Street.

Still in demand as an evangelist, Crain frequently responded to invitations to lead revival meetings or be guest speaker at special assemblies. In March, 1935, he addressed the Oklahoma Baptist Training Union assembled in Oklahoma City. At about the same time he and Mrs. Crain attended the Kentucky Baptist Assembly at the new Kentucky Baptist rustic camp site, where he was the inspirational speaker. He attended a Virginia Baptist Assembly at Massanetta Springs, Harrisonburg, Virginia, in August, 1934. One year he conducted a revival meeting in New Bern, North Carolina, and when he was invited to return the next year, the advertising circular which announced his meeting boldly proclaimed: "CRAIN IS COMING! The Man of the Mountains" brings "*Messages for Men.*" Thus preaching and holding revivals, Crain went as a servant of God and his denomination into every state of the Southern Baptist area east of New Mexico and was even invited to attend evangelistic meetings on the West Coast and Alaska.

Through the years Crain also maintained close association with his alma mater, Furman University. An alumnus of the



class of 1910, a fund raiser while state evangelist, a trustee from 1923 until his death in 1955, and a recipient of the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1930, Crain never failed to take a personal interest in the affairs of Furman and to work for her improvement. From 1932 to 1939 when debt severely plagued the institution, his vision helped the Board of Trustees see its way to the adoption of policies which solved many major financial problems. And in the period from January, 1945, through March, 1949, as pastor at Pendleton Street, he led the church to give as an additional designated gift to Furman through the cooperative program the sum of \$2,549.28. He led the church to pledge and over-subscribe a gift to Furman of more than \$20,000 for the purchase of an organ for the proposed new campus.

In the South Carolina Baptist Convention, as member, as Convention officer, and as trustee appointed by the Convention, he worked hard to pacify displays of bitterness against Furman which again and again called for abolition of fraternities or the withholding of funds. Whatever the issue at hand, he stoutly maintained that Furman was worthy of support regardless of occasional disagreements that the state Baptists might have with the policies of the trustees.

In the pursuance of this latter view he served on a committee appointed by the Board May 30, 1941, to seek additional support for Furman from the State Baptist Convention. This committee, which worked with the Executive Committee of the State Board, consisted of R. M. Hughes, W. R. Pettigrew, J. Dean Crain, Julian H. Scarborough, and Davis M. Sanders. The committee seems to have been successful. Dr. L. K. Simpson has praised Crain's work on this committee as well as his other services for Furman and the cause of Christian education: "He is sound in his thinking. At times in the Convention and in the meetings of the Furman trustees he has spoken the word that was as oil on troubled waters." Other members of the Board likewise looked to Crain for leadership

and usually supported him in what he believed to be right and appropriate for the University.

In addition to his leadership on money matters and his role as advocate of Christian education and defender of policies, Crain served actively on several other committees of the trustees, among them the committee on selection of new faculty members, a joint committee of faculty members and trustees on academic freedom and tenure, and a committee on special problems of the University. As chairman of the committee on selection of new faculty members, Crain helped set high moral, religious, and academic standards for incoming faculty members. The joint committee prepared its report on academic freedom and tenure, in accordance with recommendations of the Association of American Colleges, and this report, which was read to the trustees on November 1, 1940, and adopted, came to form the basis of the current contract agreement which new faculty members enter into with the University.

In 1947 in a meeting of the committee on special problems of Furman, Dean Crain made a suggestion, apparently as a sudden inspiration, that Furman move to a new campus site which would allow room for necessary expansion. The adoption of this suggestion by the Board brought a new challenge, and Crain was one of the most vigorous campaigners. He was so successful in raising a large sum of money that the trustees offered him a substantial check in appreciation, but he returned the check with the explanation that he was working for Furman, not for pay for himself. In crediting him with originating the idea for the relocation and expansion of Furman University, Dr. Julian H. Scarborough, a fellow trustee of many years of service, has given Crain high praise: "He had vision for the future of Furman as Richard Furman had in the beginning. A trained Christian leadership was what he was after, and he was body and soul for this new Furman and the building of it."



For his long and dedicated service to the University, the faculty in 1952 honored Crain with the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award, given annually through the benefaction of the New York Southern Society to an alumnus and to a senior man in recognition of high aspiration and noble, humanitarian qualities of character.

In his associations with Furman, as with his other associations, Crain usually found himself a controversial figure. His zealous persistence in his religious convictions and his straightforward approach to problems often led him into courses of action which hurt some persons and which aroused the emotions of others to take strong sides either for or against him. In 1938, for instance, he led in the dismissal from the faculty of Dr. Herbert Gezork, professor of religion. Gezork, a German refugee Baptist, was charged with departing from the Baptist teachings on the virgin birth, with emphasizing too strongly the social gospel, and with believing in "another chance" after death. On June 9, 1938, he received a hearing by the committee on Religious and Social Affairs; on July 22, he received a second hearing at a special meeting of the Board of Trustees, which promptly voted to relieve him of his duties.

Crain was convinced that he was making the right stand by voting against the professor: "I cannot vote for Gezork to open another book at Furman."

Someone said, "Crain, it will ruin you."

"Well, I stay that way," he replied.

Differences over this issue were sharply defined. Students, townspeople, and some of his church members severely criticized Crain for his "narrow-minded" position. "I'm just as 'narrow-minded' as the New Testament," he was heard to say. Students "booed" him in the dining hall at Furman; one student wrote him abusive letters, signed anonymously "a Furman Student." These letters Crain read and laid aside without being disturbed, for he believed in his position, and he always said only cowards write unsigned letters.

Crain's service to Furman ended, however, on a triumphant note. He lived to see the actual beginning of construction at the new campus site. At the Ground Breaking Exercises on the afternoon of October 6, 1953, he led in a brief devotional and helped to spade the first shovel of earth, two symbolic gestures of his religious faith and his putting his strength and influence behind a momentous undertaking whose matrix had been in his own heart and mind.

The president of a nearby educational institution made the summary tribute to Dean Crain for his contribution to Furman when he said in July, 1954, "What this college needs is a Dean Crain."

Believing that a minister's primary service to his community should be to preach the gospel and try to save lost souls, Crain made no effort to promote specific civic reforms. He preached against the vices of city life — drinking, dancing, gambling, licentiousness, and violation of the Lord's Day. But he had no personal "pet projects" other than the promotion of county-wide — in fact, world-wide — temperance. Next to the church, Crain considered Furman University his "greatest interest and deepest love." Mrs. Crain once chided him for neglecting her, saying "You love your school more than you love me." Whenever he could, he would work for higher standards at Furman or for an improvement in favorable public relations between Furman and the community.

At least one special service Dean Crain performed was to act as trustee of the Greenville County Tuberculosis Hospital from 1934 until his death, a period just one month short of twenty years. Bessie Massingale, Business Manager of the Hospital, says that during these years Crain was kind and helpful and always took a deep interest in the work of the board, in the hospital staff, and in the patients. She said that he felt keenly the suffering of all, that he was ever alert to an opportunity of service, always put others in front, and took no credit for ideas which he had originated. His interest in



this work added extra stimulus to the interest of his church people in this institution which for many years received and continues to receive a ministry of love and service from his people.

Mid-way through his sixty-fifth year Crain's health began to fail. A full itinerary of hard work with scarcely a moment's rest since his graduation from Furman in 1910 was now beginning to take its toll on his remarkably large, strong, and healthy, but nonetheless mortal body. For over forty years, with only rare time off for sickness, Crain had worked zealously in the vineyard of his Lord. On Sunday morning, May 26, 1946, while delivering his morning sermon, he faltered. It was a confused and apprehensive congregation which witnessed the sudden physical collapse of a beloved minister in the midst of his beloved work — preaching the gospel. At first the congregation thought he was indulging his genius for humor. In the middle of his sermon he hesitated a moment, then repeated his last remark. He paused, looked at James H. Price, and asked, "Mr. Price, what did I say?" Soon it was clear that he was painfully ill and was floundering. Moments later, moments which seemed hours to a shocked congregation, some of the men, including his son, Jimmie, assisted him to his seat and rushed him to the hospital. Mrs. Crain was terrified with apprehension, and the entire congregation shared her anxiety. Word soon came that a stomach upset and overwork had exhausted him and that he would need an extended rest.

Professor R. C. Blackwell, church clerk, expressed the concern of the church family in an immediate letter to Mrs. Crain: "The unusually large congregation this evening asks that you be assured of our unceasing prayers for an early recovery by Dr. Crain and for adequate strength for you and the family. It is evident that a great host of friends joins us in prayer that if it be God's will Dr. Crain may very soon be permitted to return to his ministry among us."

A fishing trip to Florida helped restore him to his health,

but soon he was as hard at work as ever, despite pleas from his friends that he try to take it easier. In 1948 he again took a short trip to Florida to rest and recuperate. Shortly after his return, his friend since Furman days, Porter M. Bailes, wrote him encouragingly: "I trust that your visit to Florida will bring you back to the fullness of your strength. Your spiritual and mental strength is like that of Moses. It does not abate. The fact is, it grows stronger, but these old bodies seem to have a way of breaking down. . . . You, of course, remember when the revival lifted City View off the State Mission Board, . . . the time when you discovered that enough of the gold belonged to God to keep you from want when you ventured on faith."

Finally in 1949, Dr. Crain felt that retirement was inevitable and that a younger man should succeed him as soon as possible. But when he expressed to the board a wish to resign, the deacons prevailed upon him to remain. He agreed to do so for a while longer. Still he prayed about his decision and often solicited the opinions of members of the congregation. Asked for her opinion, one member said she thought he should continue as evangelist in semi-retirement, as long as he felt able, to let other Baptist churches and their pastors have the privilege of feeling the impact of his Christian personality, his convictions about his Lord and Christ, and his beliefs in the New Testament doctrines as interpreted by Baptists.

Miss Helen McCullough, a native of Texas and a missionary to China, recalled that "He talked to me on several occasions about retiring, and I told him, 'Dr. Crain, no one but you and the Lord will let you know it, for retirement doesn't mean quitting, it merely means getting rid of all the little troublesome things of the pastorate and being able to devote your time to the work you love, Bible teaching, preaching and so forth.' . . . Dr. Crain told someone that it took a missionary to come all the way home from China to tell him he had been there too long. . . . When I next saw Dr. Crain, I said, 'Dr.



Crain, you know I didn't say that.' He replied, 'Well, you said so much, I wouldn't rightly know.' "

On November 13, 1951, Dean Crain definitely made up his mind to retire. The State Convention was then being held in his church, and at the close of the session, he left the auditorium, walked around to the treasurer's office, and announced to Mr. Johns his decision to resign, effective as early as possible in 1952. The announcement was made public on December 10, 1951.

On Friday evening, February 22, 1952, the church entertained Dr. and Mrs. Crain at a reception in the social hall of the new educational building which had been completed and occupied scarcely a year before. To overcome the tenseness and embarrassment of the occasion, Dr. Crain, in the presence of others but chiefly addressing the chairman of the Board of Deacons, R. C. Blackwell, who was moving down the receiving line, related an appropriate illustrative story: "Deacon, this is my exit. I'm reminded of the man who took his wife and nine children to the World Fair in Chicago. They moved along from one exhibit to another, seeing one thing and another here and there; the panorama of the future and the world of tomorrow — just everything. Then they saw a neon sign which said 'Exit.' The man looked at that and said to his wife and children, 'Well, we came here to take it all in. We'll go in there, too.' This is my exit — I'm taking it all in." In his customary manner Dean Crain had introduced humor into a trying situation and had put his friends at ease. As reported in *The Greenville Piedmont*, "Not only members of the church but friends throughout the city and some from out of town came by to felicitate the couple."

On the following Sunday, February 24, 1952, Dr. Crain preached his last sermon as pastor at Pendleton Street Church. His subject was "The World's Only Need," and his scripture selections were I Corinthians 2:2 and Galatians 6:14. The sermon was tape recorded by Sherman Newman. The church

bulletin that day gave a summary of the twenty-one years of achievement under the ministry of Dr. Crain. The church membership had increased from 760 to 2,421; the Sunday School enrollment had grown from 686 to 2,085. Total gifts had amounted to \$973,965. A statement of debt retirement, land purchases, and new buildings paid mute tribute to the energy and abilities of the retiring pastor. More explicitly the bulletin declared: "His leaving our pulpit draws on the emotions of all of us. . . . We are humbly grateful for the fruits of his ministry over the years. . . . Incapable, though, are we to state, or total up, or record the eternal values that have been brought to the membership and to the community under Dr. Crain's leadership. These are in terms of souls saved, of faith strengthened, of comfort brought in hours of distress and grief, of the word preached and taught, of fellowship enjoyed and bestowed, of other countless deeds of love and devotion which can be known only when the records are revealed on that final Great Day." Thus ended the most fruitful period in the ministry of J. Dean Crain.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *Baptist Believer and Pulpit Humorist*

Both as pastor and preacher, Dean Crain was a staunch Baptist. He regarded the Bible as the source of doctrine and the guide for conduct. He felt that the Baptist position on crucial doctrines was the only right interpretation. Baptist believers were to him the true heirs of Christian discipleship.

He agreed with other Baptists that salvation comes only by God's grace and that God's grace is sufficient to save the most hardened sinner, who must first repent, believe that God loves him, and accept God's Son as his Savior. With other Baptists he believed that good works and rituals will not save, that there are no "sacraments," and only two ordinances — Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He believed that baptism must be performed by immersion when one has reached the age of accountability and that baptism is not a means of grace, but an act of devoted obedience. Only the believer in Jesus can be properly baptized; only baptized believers can become church members; and immersion, he said often, is only a gesture symbolizing the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. As Jesus was immersed, so must his disciples be baptized and then lead other disciples to proclaim their faith by baptismal immersion.

While pastor at Park Street Church, Crain set forth these ideas in a tract called "My Position as a Baptist on Baptism,"

and later he repeated them in a tract called "Bible Lessons for the Home, Sunday School, and Daily Vacation Bible Schools." Throughout his ministry he preached these doctrines from the pulpit and explained them in many homes.

Crain believed fervently in prayer. It was a moment of two-way communication between man and his God and as such was primarily a private affair. He said that "there is not much a man can pray about in public." His own public prayers were short but forceful. Yet many of his people had confidence in them and were always inspired to greater faith. His custom was to hold Bible study and prayer in his own home each morning before breakfast. At these times he prayed for people who had need of God's help, including those who maintained differences with him.

Crain was a literal believer in the doctrine of heaven and hell. So insistent was he on the point that he once antagonized a South Carolina lawyer by speaking about a deceased man who had denied a literal hell. In a sermon on the topic Crain referred to the dead man to illustrate a form of heresy and concluded his illustration by saying: "I guess Brother [X] knows now whether there is a hell or not." The antagonized lawyer wrote Crain to say that it was against the law to talk about a dead person and threatened Crain with a law suit, which, however, he did not pursue.

Crain believed also in the personal existence of Satan. "People seem to look upon Satan as a mere name," he once wrote in an article in *The Baptist Courier*, "something to help the preacher out in his sermon, . . . to scare the children. . . , but he is a strong personality." He believed that Satan was constantly tempting man to sinful acts and that man must be constantly on his guard lest Satan deceive him into error.

As with most other Baptists, Crain believed in the autonomy of each local church, but he felt that each church needed to affiliate with other churches of like faith. He was therefore a firm supporter of the South Carolina Convention and the



Southern Baptist Convention. He attended regularly, as we have seen, participated in the work, rose to president of the former and vice president of the latter, and always urged his congregations to support the various activities of the conventions by giving through the "cooperative program."

Crain was such a staunch Baptist that he was opposed to the ecumenical movement. In 1919, referring to the leaders of this movement to unionize all Protestant churches, Crain wrote in *The Baptist Courier*, "The men are honest, no doubt, as well as wrong." Baptists, he believed, could not compromise their convictions, their "loyalty to the truth," by indiscriminately joining with other denominations in a diluted service. Nor would it be feasible to try to hold joint meetings in which each minister preached his own doctrines — the Methodist on sprinkling, the Presbyterian on church government, and the Baptist on baptism. He ridiculed a Baptist minister for proposing such a scheme. The only sane alternative for the Baptists was the status quo. The Baptists must remain independent of any ecumenical movement, he felt, must "stand by our convictions," and lead the world to a better day. "No doubt," he wrote, "a great many Baptists will get off the trail and chase shadows and the wind, but the majority are on the right track as I see it." For his outspoken stand on this issue, he was widely known. In 1951 the Southern Baptist Convention awarded him a place on its committee on "relations with other religious bodies." Dr. George Ragland, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Lexington, Kentucky, and editor of *The Sling and Stone*, wrote to Crain on July 7, 1951, to congratulate him on this appointment: "I am so glad to see your name on the list of the enlarged committee on Relations with Other Religious Bodies. . . . We need you on our committee, and I rejoice that you have been appointed. . . . The great majority of Southern Baptists will stay together if we will present to them a clear-cut statement of Baptist principles."

Crain so firmly believed in the rightness of the Baptist

position that he also refused to take part in community-union services. He was once offered \$500.00 to preach at a ten-day union revival meeting in Dillon; but even though he could have used the money, he had to decline the invitation. He told the "brethren" that when he got down to baptism and the Lord's Memorial Supper, "the people would not like what my conscience tells me to preach about those things." There would be division, and the people would "blame me without troubling to look up my authority." He could not jeopardize his convictions. "People will pay you to go back on your convictions, but Paul said, 'having done all to stand; stand!'"

Crain's convictions about the rightness of the Baptist position led him to adhere strictly to the doctrine of closed communion. He would not accept for church membership anyone whose baptism did not conform to the doctrines of his church, nor would he permit non-church members to participate in the ordinance of communion. Once a member of a Campbellite or Disciples of Christ Church wanted to come to Pendleton Street in full fellowship; but when Crain would not accept him, he joined another Baptist church in Greenville. Nor would Crain recognize the baptism of a young man from a Primitive Baptist Church, who thus attended services at Pendleton Street for seven years before he finally agreed to Crain's differentiation between their doctrines. When he was re-baptized, he became a loyal member of the church.

Dean Crain believed in a strict code of ethics based closely on the Bible. He did not believe in divorce and was severe upon offenders. One Sunday at Pendleton Street he admitted a couple into the church in good standing, the husband by letter, the wife by baptism; but on the following Sunday, having learned during the week that the man was divorced, he expelled the couple from the church. He was strongly opposed to the drinking of alcoholic beverages in any form. His early experiences in the Dark Corner had bred in him a fierce intolerance of drinkers. When a Park Street Sunday School



leader was discovered drinking, Crain led in his dismissal from the church. He believed too that dancing was incompatible with Christian living. Upon learning that two Sunday School workers — a superintendent and a teacher — were participating in public dancing, he asked them both to resign. For these and other moral convictions, Crain came to be known by his detractors as a narrow-minded enemy of many normal folkways of modern life but by his friends as a relentless and courageous foe of all forms of evil.

Crain had no seminary training. While at City View Church in the 1920's, he had often considered going to Louisville to attend the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, but he had decided against it. To communicate his theology and ethics, he chose ultimately to rely upon a strong faith, a liberal arts education, his persuasiveness as a speaker, and his native ability for leadership. Two other assets gave him a distinctive expression: an early life experience close to the soil and a lively sense of humor. In his writing and speaking he came to express himself through the homely allusion, the witty phrase, and the funny story.

Most of Crain's sermon topics, ideas, and patterns thus came from his own experiences, his meditations, his prayer associations with God, and from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit rather than from his reading. His sermons were simple and challenging. Often in busy places and in crowded moments he came upon an idea for a sermon. He habitually jotted these ideas on envelopes, which he seemed always to carry in his pockets. His notes usually took the form of outlines. On the back of an envelope stamped May 6, 1954, for instance, he wrote: "Going to Hell From the Church Pews. Ecclesiastes 8:10. 1. What kind of people go to hell? 2. What kind of a place? 3. Why men go there? 4. How to keep — develop it—." Another "envelope" note reads: "57 kinds of Baptists. The Lily Baptists — they toil not, neither do they spin — except on a ballroom floor."

In the leisure of his study, Dean Crain prepared his sermons on a typewriter. He listed scripture quotations and wrote brief outlines. In the margins of his typed notes he scribbled reminders to himself to use certain illustrations or stories. He never fully wrote out these marginal notes, and only rarely did he write out in a formal composition any of his lectures or sermons. When asked about the effectiveness of this technique, Crain once replied that when a preacher just studied a lot of books, quoted one fellow here and one there, sat down beforehand and wrote out in detail every sentence in the sermon, and then either memorized it or read it, "Well, then, he's just staked out" — that is, restricted like an animal tied to a stake; he can go no farther than the length of the rope will allow. Because he spoke from an incomplete outline, Crain's discourse was not easy to follow. He often spoke in incomplete sentences, or even in separate phrases, sometimes expounding a single word that stood alone. He had a way of starting a train of thought and leaving it unfinished. He expected the listener to run out all the avenues of ideas and then catch up with him as he went on with the central thought. Many of his listeners, however, felt challenged by this form of delivery. Mrs. Harold H. Snuggs, Sr., of Pendleton Street Church, for instance, who regularly sat in the middle of the auditorium directly in front of the pulpit so that she could benefit by his discourse, came to know and appreciate his manner very much.

Mrs. Snuggs especially enjoyed the expressive play of thought upon his face as he led into a humorous story. He never laughed at his jokes. Just before telling a good story, he broadcast his humor by a sweep of pleasure that crossed his face. At the climax, a bit of fire flickered in the cut of his eyes to match the pleasure showing in his face. Mrs. Snuggs was particularly impressed by the abundance of homespun aphorisms which he spontaneously created and sprinkled throughout his sermons: "You can not get the length of a



serpent until he is dead." "Some people can not smile because they are too highly starched." "It won't do to sow wild oats — you can't get them cut." "Hell is the garbage department of the universe." "It takes a great man to stand prosperity." "You can't learn the Bible by reading it. It is not enough — the Bible has to have feet under it." "If a fellow wants his wood to warm him twice, let him chop it himself." For years Mrs. Snuggs kept a notebook of these proverbial utterances.

Despite his doctrinal fundamentalism, his intense sectarianism, and his inflexible code of ethics, Crain was noted for his warm, robust humor. His genius for humor, in fact, tended to overshadow the sterner and more serious aspects of his religion so that he was often embarrassed. He once told J. E. Bailey of Charleston that he could feel people expecting him to say something humorous and that he wished he could avoid his natural inclination to accommodate them: "I don't want to be known as a funny man in the pulpit. I want to be known as a man that preaches the gospel of our Lord." But as A. C. Odum once said to J. E. Bailey, "He could be funny without trying." Crain's brother E. B. has observed that "a little wit and humor may be all we remember [of him], but that little spark is what connects us with . . . the character, the personality [of the man] — not what he said."

Frequently Crain made himself the butt of his own stories. He was especially fond of telling a story about himself and a choir member who not only could not sing but who also lisped. When choir members of a certain church were being solicited, a man with a hare-lip somehow slipped in, but no one dared to tell him he must get out. Finally, it fell on Dean Crain, the pastor, to tell him. Crain met him at the door one day and, struggling to be tactful, said, "Brother [X], we need a man to stay at this door and welcome the people, and we have decided you are the man for the job." Crain congratulated the man heartily. But the fellow said, "No, thir! I am called to thing, and I am going to thing." The pastor had

not expected a rebuff and was unprepared for a new proposition. Not knowing what to say, he told him plainly that some members were saying that he could not sing. "Who thaid I can't thing?" he asked. The preacher answered, "Why, I heard several — four or five." "O, thucks," he replied, "that'th nothing. I th'pect I heard more than a hundred thay you can't preach." In telling the story Crain always imitated with great success the choir member's lisp.

Crain effectively employed humor at deacons' meetings, conventions, and at other organizational meetings to bring about action or to stimulate enthusiasm. He was lightning-quick in selecting an appropriate anecdote. At the state convention in 1953 Crain pictured the need for more aid for Baptist educational institutions by telling about two old turkey-buzzards: the buzzards were sailing around up in the sky one day taking things easy and going nowhere in particular when all of a sudden an airplane flew between them. One old buzzard said to the other one, "Whew! he was in a hurry." His friend replied, "You'd be, too, if you were on fire inside." On the same occasion he prompted a laugh with one of his homespun similes. Dr. Annie Denmark had addressed the Convention on behalf of Anderson Junior College, of which she was president, and had made an eloquent plea for Anderson and for other Baptist schools. Dean Crain drolled, "Yep, you folks give heed to the lady — fanning the fire of education with her bonnet."

At the Southern Baptist Convention in Washington, D. C., May 12-17, 1920, Crain was unexpectedly called upon to speak during the Home Mission Board program and had to think immediately of an appropriate story to appraise the work of the Mission Board, of which he was then a member. There was a fellow in the lower part of the state, he said, who went regularly to the local combination grocery store, liquor store, and post office and often got so drunk that his horse had to take him home without guidance. One night he drank as usual



till he could scarcely talk, and as usual the boys around the store put him astride his saddle, which as a joke they had turned backwards. He slumped over and let his faithful horse take him home. When he got home, his sons came out to take him off the horse and put the horse away for the night. The father said, "Put Selam up, but don't feed him tonight; they've cut his head off." When the laughter had subsided, Crain pointed the moral: "The Home Mission work is coming up with the saddle on right."

Once at a meeting of deacons of Pendleton Street Church during a financial crisis which was so bad that the church could not pay for coal, Crain bolstered the spirits of the group by telling about a colored preacher "who was meeting with three of his deacons at one of their homes. They worried over the church debt. It was a cold night and the parson had a cold. The hostess brought in some 'spirits' to warm the deacons up and help the parson's cold. In a short while one deacon warmed up to the problem and said, 'I'll tell you whut I'se gonna do. I'se gonna pay haf o' dat debt.' Another said, 'I'll do whut I kin. I'll pay \$20.' By that time the parson felt so good he said, 'I tell yuh, brethren. We jist ain't got no debt!' "

The "jokes" in Dean Crain's stories usually turned upon incongruous situations involving people, but whether he invented the situations, lived them, or repeated them, he added a vigor that was all his own. He once told a story about a farmer whose wife kept leaving him. The first time she left, he persuaded her to come back; and the second and third times he was also successful in persuading her to return. One day after she had again gone back to her mother, the husband was in the country store, and some one asked about his wife — "she has gone home again," he said. "Why don't you 'ring' her up on the phone there and tell her to come back?" the man in the store said. The farmer, however, did not know how to use the telephone. Someone else rang for him. The telephone was one of the old-time party-line installations which

seemed especially susceptible to bolts of lightning, and at that moment when the farmer was in the store, a thunder storm had already begun. When the wife got on the line, the husband said "Hello." Just at that moment a great clap of thunder boomed out and lightning struck the line and knocked the farmer flat on his back on the floor. He bounced up immediately and said, "Yep, that's her all right, up to her same old tactics."

Often, too, Crain's stories were based on the stern or pleasant realities of religious doctrine. Once in a sermon Crain said, "Now sin is sin, no matter what you call it. Now there was old brother [X]; he backed off into hell." And Crain went on to explain how. A longer story concerns heaven. One Wednesday night at prayer meeting at Pendleton Street soon after Crain had announced his plans to retire, someone complimented him highly. Crain rose to express his gratitude by telling a yarn that former governor Ira C. Blackwood had told him: "Blackwood and a country fellow were on their way to a meeting of 'some sort or other' and the ole fellow had a cold. He took along a bottle of medicine (cold medicine, you know) and every little bit he would take a little 'snort.' The more he took, the more he talked. They were discussing some leading man in the community, what he had done for the 'church and all.' This man began to praise the good citizen; he did this, he did that, he was fine this way and that. Really getting warmed up to his subject, he said, 'Brother so and so is so good and there will be so many rewards laid up for him in heaven that sometimes I just feel like taking one of those fence rails there and knocking him in the head and let him go on to glory.'"

One of Crain's fishing trips to Florda gave him a novel story for an illustration in a sermon on facing up to religious commitments. He said that he came up to fish from one of the fishing bridges across the lake only to find the place crowded. He squeezed into a tiny spot but could scarcely maneuver to cast his rod. After a few motions and a few casual



remarks had failed to budge his neighbors, he edged closer to the one on the right and asked, "What church do you go to?" Pretty soon that fellow moved his "headquarters," and that left a little more room. Then he turned to the man on the left and asked, "Where do you go to church?" That man also moved away, and Dr. Crain had plenty of elbow room — as well as sermon material.

Crain normally used humorous phrases or anecdotes to help enliven and illustrate serious sermons, but he also had several sermons which were humorous throughout. The most famous of these humorous sermons was "Be Thou not like a Mule," based on Psalm 32:8-10: "Be ye not as the horse, or as a mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." This sermon cleverly reproves church members for their stubbornness. It defines the mulish spirit that prevails among Christians as "a hard, sullen, untractable spirit. It is held an offense among men, and how much more heinous it must be when manifest against God." Crain elaborates on the characteristics of mulishness: the mule is uncertain; the mule is a tangler; the mule never made any intellectual progress; the mule never encouraged anyone. At each point Crain draws upon personal experience with mules: "A lot of this I know myself from experience with this animal." And by *the animal* he means stubborn church members as well as the mule. He next shows the results of mulishness as a refusal to confess sins, as an absence of tenderness, as an absence of affections, as a tendency to be easily moved by appetites, as needing always to be forced into everything. He concludes the sermon by showing that Christ has doomed the spirit of the mule.

His congregation often asked to hear it, and other churches made requests that he come and deliver it. In 1935 he was invited to meet with the Georgia State Sunday School Convention, and there he preached the sermon on the "mule"

and another humorous one on "honey." Every year thereafter for sixteen years, he returned and by request preached these two sermons. Dr. T. W. Tippet of Georgia has written that "our people never lost interest in his repeating these messages . . . . He possesses a marvelous sense of humor and has unusual depth of convictions."

Humor was for Crain then an integral part of his approach to religion and was an effective technique for explaining Christianity to his church members. He who was first in life a mountaineer backwoodsman and later a preacher of the gospel brought to his ministry a genius for making homespun wisdom out of humor and turned this capacity with a high degree of success to doctrinal purposes.



## CHAPTER NINE

### *Husband and Father*

About five months before her husband's death, Ellen Crain remarked: "Dean Crain is the best husband and father anybody could ever have. He is kind, sympathetic, and liberal." After Crain's death, she was even more certain that she had been married to a model husband. Dean Crain was equally convinced of Ellen's virtues as a wife and mother, and he often expressed his love for her in writing. In 1932 he wrote some verses which said:

We have been married twenty-four years today,  
They have all been happy, I must say.  
My love for you is better as the years go by,  
And I'm sure it *will be perfect when I come to die.*

Dean Crain's sister-in-law, Mrs. E. B. Crain, thought it "remarkable" that "Dean and Ellen kept their love so strong and glowing."

Perhaps one reason for this "glowing" love was that Dean Crain continually committed his marriage into God's loving care. His notes and letters to Ellen show that his first fidelity was to his God and his second fidelity to his wife and family. Yet that was the way Mrs. Crain preferred it. Dean Crain showed his love by being attentive and considerate in the daily details of life. When he was away from home, he nearly always wrote his wife about his work.

He usually thought to bring Ellen a gift on her birthday, on anniversaries, and on other special occasions; but a special occasion was not the only time that he thought of her. A fanciful notion might strike him at any time. With his gifts he frequently sent verses. A gift of June 27, 1927, bore the note: "Stopping gray hairs,/ From your Ole Timer." A vacuum cleaner for Mrs. Crain arrived on January 1, 1925, bearing the message: "To Mrs. J. Dean Crain. This is a New Year Gift, a vacuum cleaner." He included some witty verses:

When you hear a roaring and a splash,  
You are then getting the trash.  
Do not let it like your husband sit and rust;  
Keep it picking up the dust.

A note accompanying some candy on February 9, 1938, ended: "Thus while you rest a little,/ Open this box and take a nibble." He wrote a message on the wrapping paper around a box of candy on September 3, 1934, which read: "The contents of this box will do its own talking. This is a John Alden not an Enoch Arden. With love, J. Dean Crain." He signed one of his notes: "Yours for modern poetry — Short-fellow (not Longfellow)."

In addition to verses, Crain also tried to show his affection for members of his family by drawing caricatures on the notes accompanying his gifts. His drawings usually show no more talent for painting than his rhymes and meter show a talent for poetry, but his efforts in these art forms do reveal a loving care; and their comical messages were always received in the same spirit in which they were drawn.

Dean Crain was neat in the home and helped with details of housekeeping as much as his duties would permit. He was also careful about his grooming and his dress. From his mother who was orderly and clean and who appreciated beauty, Crain had early in life learned cleanliness and respect for personal appearance. He applied these ideals all through life. Once a friend who was distressed over the personal appearance of



her country pastor's slovenly grooming and untidy dress remarked to Mrs. Crain, "Now, look at Mr. Crain there; he just looks like a picked bird." Early in her marriage, Mrs. Crain thought her husband's passion for cleanliness bordered on the fanatic. Even though she herself was not untidy, she would often find Dean cleaning up the sink or rearranging objects in the room even after she had finished straightening and cleaning the house. She also had to get accustomed to his excessive fondness for polishing his own shoes or those of his children. Finally, however, she came to humor him for this trait of cleanliness, especially when it was combined with a fondness for surprising her by bringing home her favorite delicacy, honey dew melons. Friends often chided Mrs. Crain for waiting on her husband "hand and foot"; she always replied, "You can't see it, but he also does a lot for me." And her eyes twinkled when she spoke.

Often Crain's long trips away from home, especially during the first decades of his marriage, caused the young husband and father grave concern. Mrs. Crain had given birth to James on August 12, 1909, almost a year before the couple had left Furman; and Mary Ellen was born on August 12, 1913, not long after the couple had moved to Greer; so the young mother in her home at Tigerville and later in Greer had her hands full. As we have seen earlier, Crain took Ben Odum and later Nelson Holtzclaw into his home to stay with Mrs. Crain and help with the chores and gave them such a good home life that Nelson Holtzclaw never forgot the "Christian influence" of those days nor the many opportunities for education and character building that living in the Crain home gave him.

Transportation for his family during his absences on state mission work also bothered Dean Crain; finally he was able to provide a cart and a pony. Each year for six years, he went, as we have seen, to Bailey Military Institute in Greenwood to hold a revival meeting, and each year he received an honorarium of about \$100.00. One of these years Crain used this

honorarium to buy a red pony and a cart from a man in Simpsonville. The pony would not at first be tamed for such uses as going to church, visiting, or recreation. Crain tried out the pony only to have it become so frightened by the barking of his own dogs that it reared up and would not enter his own yard on North Main Street in Greer; it took the ring of the bits in its mouth and "tore out" on a wild run through the streets of Greer. Crain did all he could — but in vain — to get the bits out of the pony's jaws. Bouncing in the cart like a leaf, he pulled on the reins, jerked and yanked, but only when the pony tired and stopped, did he free the bits and get the pony safely home.

The pony ran away again on the following day when Mrs. Crain was driving it. A neighbor, Mrs. Reeves, and the Crain children were riding with her. Mrs. Crain was wearing a wide sailor hat that was pinned to her hair with a long hair pin; and as the pony bounced the cart, Mrs. Crain's hat bounced. While she yelled and jerked at the pony, the children and Mrs. Reeves held on for dear life. Finally the ride ended. The pony later tamed down, but these two incidents gave the neighbors in Greer something to laugh and joke about for many years.

Frolicsome experiences like this one with the pony brought the Crain family close together. Incidents of grief and sorrow cemented the family even closer together. Through all the joys and sorrows, Dean Crain loved and cared for his children as only a Christian father can, and the Crain children returned his love with childlike trust and adoration.

When the "flu" epidemic of 1918 reached Greer, Mrs. Crain became sick and had to go to bed. Since it was impossible to find anyone to care for the family, Dean Crain himself had to cook for his sick wife and his two small children. After several days of patient partaking of his meals, little five-year-old Mary Ellen meekly asked, "Daddy, can't we have something to eat besides 'white gravy'?"



It was in Greer, too, that Jimmie got the measles; his eyes were swollen, and he looked pitiful in every way. Dean Crain was leading his little family at family worship in the sick room, and as each member read and prayed and sang, the little sick boy tried to do his part. He began to sing, but he looked so weak that his mother burst out crying. The whole scene tugged at the heart strings of the father who prayed earnestly for his sick child to get well.

There was a time in Columbia when Mary Ellen had appendicitis and pneumonia so badly that she had to be taken to the hospital. The doctor had to tell the parents, "I can not say if your little girl will get well or not." The father and mother went home and prayed and prayed. Crain said that he had not received any unction; so the distraught parents prayed again. A fourth time they prayed, and when they finished with the plea, "Let her be resting according to thy will," Dean Crain said, "I will go call now." When he called the hospital, the nurse told him: "Mary Ellen is resting. Her fever has gone down, and she is sleeping now."

The Crains proudly watched the moral and physical development of their children. They used to tell an incident about Jimmie when he was still a child not yet capable of understanding scriptural metaphors. At one of the evening altars, Dean Crain began to read Psalm 24:4: "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart. . . ." Jimmie looked at his grubby little hands and politely said, "Excuse me a minute." He ran out to wash his hands. Father and mother suppressed a good laugh and patiently waited for the "clean hands" to return before proceeding with worship.

Dean Crain went on a trip to Washington when Jimmie was eleven years old. The boy asked day by day when his daddy was coming home. His mother carefully explained that his father was attending meetings with many people from many towns and that he could not come home until a certain day. Jimmie went out beside the house, put his head on his

arms up against the house, and cried. He wrote his daddy a letter to come home and said, "I need my daddy more than those people do."

In a letter written while he was in New Orleans on May 14, 1930, Dean Crain was mindful of the passing of time in the lives of his children. Jimmie was at college then, and Mary Ellen was finishing high school. "I saw James in Greenville [at Furman]," he wrote. "He is a fine looking, *shall I say man?* Yes, I am forced to say it. He weighs 185 pounds and looks like a real man. Your boy and mine — how strange it is. Yesterday he was toddling after me down that old Swamp Rabbit Railroad, now he is a grown man. I hope that James will have your goodness and my determination and carefulness about *debts*. . . . If he combines us both he can get along. Mary Ellen is going to be a fine business woman if she does not marry a gourdhead and dry up on the stalk. . . . Get Mary Ellen's clothes for her graduation. I am proud of her. . . . I want to say that you can count on it, I still love you as I have always done. May the Lord keep you all."

On August 8, 1933, Dean Crain performed the ceremony that joined together in "holy matrimony" his son and his son's bride, Caroline Inman of Greenville. The wedding took place in Pendleton Street Baptist Church. Two years later on August 15, 1935, while he was in Oklahoma, he proudly received news of the birth of his first grandchild, Caroline Margaret Crain. He immediately wrote her a letter: "It is said that every baby is a new effort of God to do better. Now, I am so anxious to see you and hear you talk and smile. *It is one of the long looked for joys*. They announced at the Oklahoma Baptist Assembly in the presence of about 3,000 that you had come. May the Lord bless you and keep you always and may you make a great and good woman. With lots of love, From Grandpa Crain. J. D. C."

In after years Caroline faithfully wrote her "Daddy Crain" when he was away from home. When he went to San Francisco



to the Southern Baptist Convention in 1951, Crain wrote to thank her for her correspondence: "You will never know how much I appreciate your fine letters." Describing the Grand Canyon, the redwood trees, and other wonders of nature, which she was to see soon on a trip to the West, he added: "You will have more faith in the Lord. He is the creator and keeper of all things and especially the good people who believe in Him, which you do."

On a card picturing the Fountain of Youth in St. Augustine, Florida, "Daddy Crain" wrote Caroline: "I am keeping your orders as far as I can. I am going to carry your grandmother to this fountain. She will be little Ellen Wilson again. She really was a beautiful girl at sweet sixteen. With love, Daddy Crain, P. S. Remember me to the elderly people and Dean" — her younger brother. From Miami in May, 1952, at the Southern Baptist Convention, Crain sent her a letter containing a self-drawn caricature of "a delegate"; in the corner of the page near the end of the letter, he told her, "As soon as you get this, get busy with pen and ink."

John Dean Crain, grandfather, was proud and delighted when the James W. Crains named their second child, born October 27, 1936, after him — John Dean Crain, II. Granddaddy Crain loved his little grandson as much as he loved his granddaughter and played with him often. He always tried to be gentle and kind with him, but one Halloween he gave the baby a fright. He put on a skeleton mask, and little Dean Crain, II, screamed when his granddaddy's face disappeared.

On August 19, 1934, Dean Crain performed the wedding ceremony of his daughter Mary Ellen and her bridegroom Henry Covington of Cheraw. Both Henry and Mary Ellen, who had been dating for two years as students, had been graduated from Furman University only a few weeks. Since neither one wanted a formal church wedding, Dr. Crain married his daughter in his own home before a small family group

and a few close friends. At his daughter's request, the Reverend J. D. Crain, who was "moved," as Mrs. Crain put it, to be asked, performed the ceremony unassisted.

The Crains immediately accepted their son-in-law Henry and daughter-in-law Caroline. And Henry and Caroline came very soon to feel at home. In Dean Crain's last years Caroline was very close to the family and often gave of her time to drive her father-in-law to perform errands. Henry thought Dean Crain "the *best* man I've ever known" and told him in a letter in 1944 from an Anti-Aircraft Training Center in Louisiana: "I think more of you than any man living. You have given me confidence in myself. Most of all, though, you have strengthened my faith in God. . .you have set such an example of a life with God."

Dean Crain enjoyed teasing his family. He loved to tell the story on Mrs. Crain that she was at a Sunday School class meeting when the question of a "personal devil" was under discussion. Mrs. Crain's eyes flashed, and she said, "Yes, and I meet him face to face every day at the parsonage."

Crain always obeyed the laws of his community and tried to uphold high standards of integrity for his family. He was, therefore, greatly chagrined once to be placed in jail. He himself never would tell the story on himself; E. D. Solomon of Florida has given the details of the incident, which probably took place during one of Crain's fishing trips for his health in the late 1940's. Solomon writes: "Several years ago my 'phone rang. A voice said, 'Hello, Ed, this is Dean Crain. I am in trouble. Come and help me.'"

"I said, 'Where are you?'"

"He said, 'I am in jail. Come and get me out.'"

"Leaving my office I met an attorney and asked him to go with me. Dean was in the police station on my side of the city. The young man who was driving his car had passed a stopped school bus. The police brought him in. They were



quite rough with him. Dean said, 'Ed, don't you tell this on me. I am ashamed of it.'

"He had a funeral at home and just had to get home. The judge wanted to lock up the young man and hold him for trial next day. Dean said, 'No, if anybody is locked up it will be me.' He was not well at that time." As far as we know, the incident remained a carefully guarded secret throughout Crain's life.

In the 1950's Mrs. Crain began having trouble with her eyes. Doctors diagnosed her difficulty as cataracts. The Crains were greatly depressed by this knowledge. They were building a new home and were waiting for the time when her eyes would be ready for the operation when Dr. Crain went to hold a meeting in Cordele, Georgia. From there he wrote her: "I want you to keep down all excitement and unnecessary worry. I want you to *see* and *live* in the new house a long time. Watch your blood pressure and eat properly. His grace is sufficient for us, lean on it. . . . 'Faith is the victory; thy faith hath made thee whole.' This is the remedy. Let us keep a good stock on hand and in our hearts. I hope we can keep our heads above debt and rejoice in the Lord all the time. . . . I believe the Lord sent me here. May the Lord bless and keep you in every way."

Mrs. Crain's vision soon became so impaired that she had to use a magnifying reading glass. One day as she picked up the glass and began to maneuver it to read to her husband something that she had just enjoyed reading to herself, Crain offered to read for her; but she insisted upon trying for herself. A rush of loving pity, concern, and apprehension swept over his countenance, and he slowly turned his face and appeared to walk aimlessly from the room.

Just after Dean Crain returned from an interim pastorate in Chattanooga, in the summer of 1954, Mrs. Crain had a successful operation. And soon after the operation, the new home was finished. In November, 1954, the Crains moved into

the first private home they had built since they had left Greer in 1920. They had built this first home in Greer on land that Mrs. Crain had inherited from her grandfather. In City View the Crains had lived in the parsonage, a large two-story house with a spacious study on the second floor. But the large downstairs parlor had served the City View Church as educational room for Sunday School classes and monthly circle meetings. The Crains had lived in the Park Street Church parsonage on Belleview Avenue in Columbia. And in Greenville they had lived in several different houses rather than disturb the Hahns who were occupying the Pendleton Street Church parsonage. It was with a welcome sigh of relief, therefore, in the fall of 1954 that the Crains moved for the last time in Greenville into their new comfortable red-brick one-story house on the corner of Jones and Watts. But as God would have it, Dean Crain did not have long to enjoy this new home.



## CHAPTER TEN

### *Service Unto Death*

In February, 1952, at the age of seventy-one, Dean Crain left Pendleton Street Church but did not retire from the active ministry. Until his last days he continued to serve his Lord as evangelist, pulpit supply, and interim pastor. A complete chronological list of his engagements is unavailable, but he served in many churches throughout the Carolinas and Georgia. He was happy to be called to rural or small-town churches. He felt that he could offer these churches a sympathetic service because he had never lost his devotion to small communities such as the one at Tigerville where he had been brought up.

He held revival meetings sometime during the period from 1952 through 1954 at more than a dozen Baptist churches, including Rocky Creek in Pickens County; West Greenville in Greenville; Ebenezer in Travelers Rest; St. Stephens in Ocean Drive and Little Rock; First Baptist in Taylors; Graham Baptist in Sumter; Rose Hill in Georgetown; Mauldin Baptist in Mauldin; and Timmons ville Baptist, jointly with the pastor, W. P. Hall, in Timmons ville — all in South Carolina; and at Ebenezer in Cordele and the First Baptist in Moultrie — both in Georgia. Dr. Crain also served at intervals during these years as interim pastor, once at Inman Mills in Inman, South Carolina, and once at Lookout Mountain Baptist Church in

Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Paul O. Batson, Jr., pastor at Little Rock, has written about the meeting in his church: "We had a wonderful meeting. The people attended the services in large numbers and received Dr. Crain in a gracious manner. Just his presence meant much to the community." Dr. J. William Harbin in the calendar of Taylors First Baptist Church for October 18, 1953, said about Dr. Crain's coming for a revival: "He has retired from the pastorate but not from the pulpit. . . . His messages are warm hearted, dashed with a natural bit of humor, and fastened with a firm cord of conviction and passion." Dr. Crain had been a true friend and guide for over fifteen years to young "Bill" Harbin as the young pastor had sought God's will for his life.

In the pastor's paragraph in the calendar of the First Baptist Church of Moultrie, Georgia, J. Alex Herring stated: "It is our prayer that with his long experience and able ministry he will guide us unerringly to the foundation rock of all our life and greatly strengthen our church through the work of the Spirit;. . .that you shall not only learn to know him who is called of God, but that you shall know better the God who called him and that through his ministry we may grow more like the Master."

When Dr. Crain was invited to supply at Lookout Mountain in Chattanooga in June and July, 1954, a fellow pastor in that city wrote him: "Dr. Crain, I pray that you will come. . . . Interdenominationalism with its easybelievism is an impending threat to our Southern Baptist work in this area." Dr. John F. Vines was supplying at St. Elmo Baptist Church in Chattanooga when he heard that Dr. Crain was going to Lookout Mountain and wrote to his friend to say he had heard that "the man I have loved so long is coming to tame the Yankees who took Lookout. I am happy that I may get to see you some more *before I die.*"

Apparently Dr. Crain spoke to the pastors in the area



while at Lookout Mountain, for Dr. Vines wrote him on August 10, 1954: "Since you gave the pastors such a fine address, they have called me and said they wanted more, so I am to speak to them August 23; . . . pray for me that day and every day!" After Crain's term as supply pastor was over at Lookout Mountain, Dr. Vines wrote: "The church on the Mountain seems to be having services with whoever they can get. I somehow wish I could go up and rattle around in your big shoes for a while."

One of the calendars at Lookout Mountain Church carries an outline of "God's Financial Plan" given to the church by "Mr. Crain." The points of the outline are (1) God owns everything; (2) Every Christian is a steward; (3) God requires the right kind of spirit in giving; (4) God wants His work carried on in a systematic manner; and (5) He tells us where to carry the tithes and offerings.

The two months that Crain spent with the members of this church were, said Mrs. Crain after her husband's death, an "anointing for his homegoing."

After his retirement, Dean Crain seldom returned to Pendleton Street Church. He believed that a retired pastor should not try to participate in "the running of the church" of which he is a member but of which another minister is the pastor. In accord with this belief, Crain kept busy elsewhere. Two of his visits to Pendleton Street were official in nature. On Sunday, February 8, 1953, the church dedicated the new educational building; and the pastor, Dr. D. M. Rivers, conducted the services, and Dr. J. Dean Crain preached the dedication sermon. On this occasion Dr. B. O. Williams, Professor of Social Sciences at the University of Georgia, unveiled a portrait that he had painted of Dr. Crain. The portrait was given to the church by Mr. and Mrs. D. W. Hiott; D. W. Hiott, Jr.; and B. O. Hiott. This portrait now hangs in the corridor of the building that was planned and built under Dr. Crain's leadership.

On September 3, 1954, Crain returned again to Pendleton Street Church to preach the ordination sermon of Jerry O. Aiken. Aiken in his early years had lived on Perry Avenue across from Crain, had attended Pendleton Street Church, and joined there under Crain's pastorate. He thought highly of his former pastor: "His staunchness, his forthrightness, and his uncompromising attitude toward wrong influenced me greatly." These traits of character in the older minister had influenced the younger man to enter the Baptist ministry. Dr. Crain used I Timothy 4:16 as his text for the sermon: "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." Crain told the young preacher that "a crowd is not a church." He warned him that "mere worldly wisdom will not make a sensible man — Solomon was the wisest fool I know anything about. . . . When a church puts on more than a man can stand, the mind gives way first, then he starts running around on his feet. . . . If sound in business and ignorant in spiritual things he'll be a little cracked. . . . Sprinkling has torn up the pattern."

One of Crain's chief interests during his retirement years was working with the Greenville Rescue Mission. At first he had thought the mission was just a place for "bums," according to Mrs. A. H. Watts, Secretary; but a short time after accepting an appointment to the Advisory Board on November 7, 1953, he realized that the Mission offered a major service to needy people and that the influence there was often "as seed on fertile ground."

Crain gave the Mission a dignified spiritual leadership. He led in establishing the habit of prayer from the heart at every meeting to replace routine reading of prayers. He himself always prayed for the needs of the Mission. Once he gave Mrs. Watts a list of a few people for whom he had prayed. He never returned from a personal visit with a needy person with a negative report. He never allowed anyone to praise



him. He professed with a simple modesty to be "just an instrument" and gave "the Lord" credit for all his services. He was quiet, gentle, and kind in performing his duties, said Mrs. Watts; in his informal talks at the Mission, he challenged the workers to more total dedication and often gave the hope of salvation to unsaved sinners and erring Christians.

There appeared at the Mission one day a young man with a college degree in engineering who was "down and out" because of the curse of liquor. He had drifted into Greenville with fifty cents, had asked a man on the street about finding a place for night, and had been directed to the Rescue Mission. There he remained for two nights where under the influence of Dr. Crain he became genuinely converted. Crain told the young man, "You can not quit drinking by yourself. You turn over a new leaf, but the wind will blow it back. God can do it for you." This young man was, at this writing in 1955, being rehabilitated in another city, but he was still sending small offerings to the Mission with notes of gratitude to God and to the Christian people for helping him.

Mrs. Watts remarked after Crain's death that "Dr. Crain's spirit and influence are still felt among us." She said that one day a member of the Board asked lightly, "What about our boy [X]? Has he got on another jag?" Quietly but kindly, a fellow Christian worker rebuked the board member: "You would not have said that if Dr. Crain had been here." After association with Dr. Crain, Mrs. Watts said that she herself felt more dependent upon God, that her faith had been strengthened, and that she had grown spiritually.

When a political rally sponsored by independent voters and Eisenhower supporters was held in Columbia on September 30, 1952, Governor James F. Byrnes asked Dr. Crain to lead in the Invocation. Byrnes called upon Crain not only because the two men had known each other for thirty years and had been friends but because Byrnes knew that Crain "was loved by people all over the State who regarded him as

an outstanding leader of the largest religious denomination in South Carolina." Dr. Crain prayed that the "Almighty God" might "lead the people of this country to elect God's man to be the servant of all the people in all directions." Writing about the rally, a reporter for a Washington newspaper said: "Enthusiastic as he was, Gov. Byrnes did not match the fervor of Rev. Crain of Greenville, who prayed."

Governor Byrnes held the counsel of Dean Crain in high esteem and often had consulted him on special local problems. He once, for instance, conferred with him on the South Carolina school problem: "I consulted him," wrote Byrnes later, "because I valued his judgment."

One of Crain's last official acts for his beloved denominational schools, which he had served throughout his life, was to pledge one hundred dollars to North Greenville Junior College in a fund-raising campaign in the summer of 1954. He signed the regular pledge card. On December 15, 1954, he wrote a short letter to M. C. Donnan, President of North Greenville, and sent it along with the gift. A postscript said, "If you cannot read this, come to see me, and please send me that note I signed." Almost ten years earlier, on January 1, 1945, Crain had led Pendleton Street Baptist Church to begin the contribution of one hundred dollars monthly to this same school. As of July 29, 1955, the church was continuing this policy. Crain's personal pledge was thus consistent with his official attitude.

He had already performed his last official services to Furman University when in October, 1953, he had participated in the ground-breaking ceremonies at the site of Furman's new campus. Earlier, during commencement in 1952, he had been invited to make the main address at the Alumni Banquet. Mr. Romaine Barnes, president of the Alumni group, said that "Dr. Crain had a lot of wit and humor and I enjoyed sitting by him at the table. It was my privilege to introduce him as speaker of the evening. He made a fine, constructive



speech, interspersed all along with his fine wit and humor. Though I am not a Baptist," Barnes continued, "I appreciated and loved Dr. Crain. I always looked forward to seeing and hearing him — and that is right much for a man to say about any preacher, especially when he doesn't belong to his denomination." Many other friends and alumni of Furman, regardless of their faith, seemed to feel the same way about Crain because of his multiple contributions to the University.

By December, 1954, Crain's service was nearing its close. On Friday evening before Christmas a wanderer who knew Dr. Crain came to the door of his home and told a sad tale and asked for a place to sleep. He said he had "just walked out" of the State Hospital. Dr. Crain took him to the Salvation Army officers who found him a room. On the next Sunday night just as Crain anticipated enjoying the service in his church conducted by the young people, among them his grandson Dean, he received a call that the refugee put up by the Salvation Army had disappeared. Crain spent that Sunday evening, which was cold and wet, trying in vain to find the missing man. The incident took place about three weeks before Crain's death.

A week later Crain participated in the funeral services for the Reverend F. S. Childress at Griffin Church in Pickens County. Those present noted that Crain appeared weak and seemed to be failing, but noticed too that although weak and tired he still had a nimble wit. He ended his discourse with the sentence: "Fulton Childress' life was as innocent as a dew drop." Crain's Greenville friends were also not fully aware of his weakening condition, for his wit seemed as robust as ever. When the subject of wit was being discussed among some of these friends, Mr. Harlon Riggins said, "The Blackwell family has a lot of wit." Crain replied, "Yes, and some sense."

Two of the last services that Dr. Crain did were to try to straighten out confusion about some insurance for Mrs. Crain's maid and to see the Social Security Office about a

missing check which "Simpkins," the aged yard man, was late in receiving.

Dean Crain himself seemed to have some understanding of the rapid ebbing of his strength. On Friday, January 7, 1955, his daughter-in-law Caroline, Mrs. James W. Crain, had driven him up to the James Crain farm near Travelers Rest so that he could see the pouring of the foundation for the young couple's new house. As they drove away, Crain remarked that he was glad he had lived to see the construction work begin. Caroline replied that she, too, was glad and added that she was sure he would live to spend many happy hours visiting them in the new house. Crain did not answer.

On Saturday, January 8, Crain visited K. T. McKinney, pharmacist at Bruce and Doster Drug Store, for some medical prescriptions. McKinney has related that as Crain started out of the store, he went back to the prescription counter and said, "Kirby, I just want to thank you for all the kind things you have ever done for me." As he walked out on the sidewalk to enter the car driven by his grand-daughter Caroline, he seemed to be confused and turned the wrong way. The doorman at the Poinsett Hotel, who had known and loved Dr. Crain for many years, assisted him to the car.

On Sunday evening, January 9, friends came in, and he seemed happy to have them. The Crains retired about 10:30. Mrs. Crain awoke about 1:30 and saw Dean adjusting the window. He said that he had not felt very well and had not been able to sleep; he added, "I feel better now." He returned to bed saying, "I am easy now," and soon fell asleep. Mrs. Crain slept also.

When she awoke about 6:30 on the morning of January 10, 1955, she found her husband resting peacefully. He had slept his last sleep on earth. She knew that when next he would awaken, he would be in that better world which he had longed to reach and which he had often preached about. In truth he was "easy now."



## Epilogue

Even though Dean Crain had visibly been failing in health for some months, the community received the news of his death with shocked surprise. Hurt voices went over telephone wires as friends passed on the news in subdued tones: "Dean Crain is dead."

*The Greenville Piedmont* on January 10 and *The Greenville News* on January 11 carried front-page stories, giving brief resumés of Crain's life and service. Newspapers throughout the state picked up the stories. *The Piedmont* called Crain "a long-time leader of the Southern Baptist and South Carolina Baptist Conventions" and said "The Community Mourns" his death; *The Piedmont* called him "one of the patriarchal stalwarts of the Baptist faith," a "confidant of other ministers" whom he assisted "over the years in solving problems of church administration. . . . He occupied his pulpit with demanding dignity but also with humility."

*The Greenville News* carried a comprehensive summary of his life and work and said that, in addition to his denominational services, he always "maintained a close touch with public affairs, and the influence he exerted on them was often considerable." An editorial in the *News* called Crain a "Beloved Man of God," who "accepted every opportunity to serve that he could. . . . It is the privilege of few men to be blessed with the rare good humor, love of his fellow man, and implicit trust in his Maker that characterized the everyday life of Dr. Crain. . . . This man of God left the world better than he found it."

The Crain family received scores of letters, cards, and

telegrams. Many friends sent flower arrangements and potted plants to the home or sent floral tributes to the funeral parlor of Thomas McAfee Funeral Home. People throughout the county and state came personally to pay their respects to Dean Crain as he lay in state.

At three o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, January 11, Dr. D. M. Rivers conducted the funeral services in Pendleton Street Baptist Church. He was assisted by Dr. A. E. Tibbs, Dean of Furman University, and James A. Howard, South Carolina State Secretary of Evangelism. Miss Margaret Anne Snuggs and Mrs. Sam Witcher, church organist, began playing soft organ music at two o'clock, and the church choir sang musical selections during the service. The church overflowed with friends who came to pay tribute to this man of faith. Dr. Rivers said in his message that "A giant among men has fallen. . . . His greatness shone as a builder of churches, a denominational leader, an effective evangelist, and a champion of Christian education. . . . We are not here today to lament a defeat but commemorate a triumph." Dr. Tibbs said, "Death is a mystery. The influence of a great personality is equally a mystery. . . . I would like to emulate from his life the unselfish sharing of the good things which Christ has given him — the breadth of his sympathies, the investment of himself in others. Thank God for the mystery of it all."

The Pendleton Street Baptist Church dedicated its church paper of January 13 to Crain's memory. A copy of the portrait painted by B. O. Williams graced the front page and bore the caption: "Church Builder — Denominational Leader — Champion of Christian Education — Effective Evangelist — Consecrated and Faithful Minister of this Church for twenty-one years."

Seven days later *The Baptist Courier* editorialized: "Who could write adequately of a man like Dr. J. Dean Crain? He was a man of such individuality that efforts at comparison of him with others are almost futile; and his record of service



was so impressive as to be almost immeasurable . . . a preacher with great spiritual power . . . he loved his people with unfeigned devotion and served them with all his strength."

*The Sling and Stone*, a publication of the First Baptist Church of Lexington, Kentucky, in its issue of March 12, called Dean Crain "a Princely Preacher" and said that "nobody who ever knew him doubted his love of the word of God and the truth committed to Baptists."

The United States House of Representatives gave time to Robert T. Ashmore of Greenville for eulogizing Dean Crain on January 13: "His primary purpose was to save souls, but his interest in local, State and National Government never lessened. He realized a democracy is based on Christian principles. He was certain the strength of his country depended on the moral and spiritual strength of the individual citizen. He was a great minister of the gospel, but underneath it all, he was a great American." The South Carolina General Assembly passed a resolution memorializing Dean Crain on February 16, and the Clerk of the House mailed a copy to Mrs. Crain.

The Board of Trustees of Furman University expressed gratitude for Dr. Crain's exemplary life, his "dynamic and invincible faith, . . . deep-seated convictions, . . . his comprehensive contributions to Furman, his constant solicitation for her physical welfare, . . . initiating plans for the Greater Furman University; his indefatigable labors on her behalf, his wise counseling; . . . fearless guidance in periods of crisis; deep concern for her vigorous spiritual health."

A message of sympathy came from the White House, Washington, D. C., bearing the signature of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Reminding Mrs. Crain that he had met her husband in 1952, President Eisenhower said, "As I listened to his prayer on the steps of the Capitol in Columbia, I was so impressed with his earnestness and his simplicity that I in-

quired about him and learned of the high esteem in which he was held throughout the State."

The North Greenville Junior College *Alumni News* of February, 1955, paid tribute to "Dr. Crain's Contribution to North Greenville." Recalling that Dean Crain had enrolled at the Academy as a student in 1899 and had returned as principal from 1910-1912, the article said: "Thus began the career of a noble servant of the Lord whose influence was destined to be felt throughout the territory of the Southern Baptist Convention." In the same issue appeared a picture of the "Dean Crain Ministerial Band," so named in Crain's honor many years earlier.

On Sunday morning, February 17, Dr. Rivers announced from the pulpit of Pendleton Street Baptist Church that a "Dean Crain Memorial Fund" for the Greater Furman Drive had been initiated by a gift from Mr. E. C. Davis, member of Park Street Baptist Church in Columbia. The church bulletin explained that R. Frank Kolb, Executive Secretary of the Baptist Foundation of South Carolina, was handling the donations. Dr. Rivers made the first Greenville contribution to the fund. *The Baptist Courier* of January 27 carried a review of the life and service of Dean Crain and announced the news of the Memorial Fund to the Baptists of the State. *The Furman University Magazine* of February also featured the "Crain Memorial Fund," and Dr. John L. Plyler, President of the University, wrote in his column: "A denominational leader of great stature, Dr. Crain was a devoted friend of Furman and a staunch advocate of Christian education. The burden of his heart in his later years was the Furman expansion program, and he gave much of his time to speeding its development. It is no overstatement to say that his devotion to Furman was exceeded only by his devotion to his Church and his God."

Dean Crain had large talents that went with his large body and his vast sources of energy, and, as Dr. A. E. Tibbs, Dean of Furman University, said, "he might have been great



in worldly attainment. . . , but he humbled himself to be a servant” of God. He gave his life unselfishly in the service of his Lord and would have others live, not necessarily as he himself lived, but as Jesus lived — with faith and consecration.

## *Acknowledgments*

This book would not have been possible without the cooperation of Dr. and Mrs. J. Dean Crain and the Reverend E. B. Crain. Dean Crain was at first hesitant about the value of making public the story of his life. When approached in June, 1954, about eight months before his death, he felt that no one would care to read his biography; as the months passed and a searching recall brought to light long-forgotten episodes, he began to realize that his life might after all contribute to his ministry as a sort of "testimonial." He answered questions, granted long interviews, and voluntarily offered information. In like manner Mrs. Crain gave encouragement and assistance; she sat in on most of the interviews and after her husband's death continued to help solve problems of fact and chronology by making available her husband's correspondence and sermon notes and her own scrapbook. The Reverend E. B. Crain showed the same generous spirit in filling in many intimate details of background about his brother's life.

The author and assistant author have shared the responsibilities of authorship as follows: Mrs. Lillie B. Westmoreland conceived the idea of the book, conducted the interviews, did the research, and put the data through several drafts before calling upon Dr. Alfred S. Reid of Furman University for assistance in preparing the manuscript for publication. Dr. Reid reorganized the material under new chapter headings, suggested new areas for research, reduced the length, and rewrote the manuscript. Mrs. Westmoreland, therefore, assumes major responsibility for the accuracy of the facts and for the truth of the interpretations, and Dr. Reid assumes major responsibility for format and style. Mrs. Westmoreland's



original manuscript — a master's thesis entitled "A Biography of J. Dean Crain" (1955), prepared under the supervision of Dr. Charles W. Burts and Dr. Henry Grady Owens of the Graduate School of Furman University — contains footnotes, additional material deleted from this book, and a brief appendix of Crain's sermons and addresses. A copy of the "Biography" is in the Furman University Library.

A bibliography of published and unpublished sources follows. Here the author wishes to thank all those persons who graciously answered questions, volunteered information, granted interviews, wrote letters, or helped in other ways: *Letters or Signed Statements*: Dr. Porter M. Bailes, Sr., Dr. James E. Bailey, the Rev. Paul O. Batson, the Hon. James F. Byrnes, Mabel L. Cox, R. O. Davis, W. A. Harrell, Dr. T. L. Holcombe, J. B. Johns, Dr. J. Nelson Holtzclaw, Helen L. McCullough, Bessie Massingale, Dr. Leonard K. Simpson, Mrs. W. L. Smoak, E. D. Solomon, Dr. T. W. Tippet; *Interviews*: Alice Adams, Mrs. Arthur Agnew, Dr. R. C. Blackwell, Romaine Barnes, the Rev. Napoleon Chapman, Mrs. Henry Covington, James W. Crain, Mrs. James W. Crain, Caroline Crain, E. C. Davis, Dr. M. C. Donnan, J. Parker Edens, Judge E. Inman, R. A. Jolley, Mrs. G. W. McManaway, Kirby McKinney, Mrs. Harlan Riggins, Dr. D. M. Rivers, Dr. Julian Scarborough, Mrs. H. H. Snuggs, Velma Morrow Taylor, Dr. A. E. Tibbs, Mrs. A. H. Watts.

To the Hiotts of Hiott Press, and especially to D. W. Hiott, Jr., the author expresses gratitude for their personal interest, helpful suggestions, and for their generous donation of photographs and other materials.

To her sister, Margaret B. Lawhorn, the author expresses appreciation for assistance in many ways.

To Judy and Toby, who loved "Big Crain" and who have tolerated with patience and interest their Mother's work on this project, the author expresses gratitude.

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Signed Communications to writer.

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